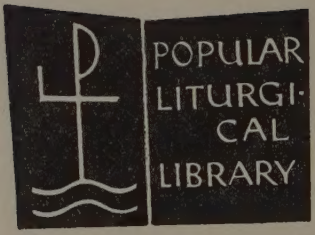
THE CHURCH'S YEAR OF GRACE

Septuagesima to Holy Saturday

MONASTERY OF ST. ALPHONSUS
REDEMPTORISTINE NUNS
LIGUORI, MISSOURI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The Church's

YEAR OF GRACE

by

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SECOND EDITION
revised according to the directives for the Simplification of the Rubrics and the Restored Holy Week Liturgy

Volume 2

Septuagesima to Holy Saturday

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The Proper of the Season

The Easter Season

We now begin the second phase in the Church's year of grace, Easter. St. John's words, "The light shines in the darkness" (John 1:5), served as an excellent summary of the Christmas cycle, which resembled the night in many respects. The Easter season, radiant as the noonday light, we may epitomize with another phrase from the apostle, "The darkness grasped it not." In fact, darkness now continues its struggle against the light as against an enemy; but to those who receive it, Christ gives "the power of becoming sons of God."

Our Savior brought to earth a kingdom of light; this was the work of the Christmas cycle. Most dramatically the light penetrated the night of Advent, and thereafter its radiance kept constantly increasing: the light of Christmas, the brilliance of Epiphany, the blaze of Candlemas. We may summarize the Christmas cycle, then, in the single word "light" (Greek *phos*).

The Easter drama contains a greater number of acts, and its score is more profound. At first darkness engages the Light in a mighty struggle and inflicts upon it bloody defeat (Holy Week); but then, as the springtime sun, Light rises in bril-

The design. According to legend the phoenix perishes in the flames only to rise again from the ashes rejuvenated; during Lent Christians are consumed by zeal for fasting so that they may rise to new life with Christ on Easter.

liance and triumph on Easter morn, and attains high noon at Pentecost. Never again will it sink, rather its destiny is transformation into the light of eternal glory (parousia).

We may approach Easter in another way. Whereas at Christmas Christ manifested Himself primarily as light, He now manifests Himself in the Church and in the soul as life, "In Him was life." And He fills us with divine life in baptism and the Eucharist, the purchase price of this most excellent gift being His death. Accordingly the deep meaning of Easter, the second section of the Church year, is *life through death.* Thus the ancient symbol of Christ, *phos-zoe* (light-life) serves well as a caption over the two phases of the Church's year of grace. Between these two cycles there is a marked harmony; the one flows from the other. The light must shine before it can create life by its warmth.

From other viewpoints, however, the two cycles stand independent of each other. In both we start from the very beginning; in Advent as well as in Lent we place ourselves in the state of unredemption. We feel as if we were still unbaptized, still without grace. Here the liturgy is at its dramatic best as it alternates beween human nothingness and the great reality which is divine life, life in full abundance.

Fallen mankind owes our Lord a debt of gratitude for two great benefits. The first is His incarnation; this was the theme of the Christmas cycle. Nevertheless, the incarnation was merely the promise for a second and greater gift, that offered us in the Easter cycle: redemption. Christ is now seeking to redeem us from sin. We must therefore become conscious of being poor sinners. To acquire this spirit is one of the reasons for Lent. Christ wants to redeem us by His passion, cross, and resurrection; and we commemorate these mysteries during Holy Week and on Easter. He wants to make us children of God and desires to send us the Holy Ghost; our cooperation with Him will show itself in how we keep Eastertide and Pentecost.

Evidently we are entering a time which is very important for the salvation of our souls and of great significance for the

Church; and we can easily see why the Church strives to prepare and purify us most thoroughly in order to be ready worthily to celebrate Easter, the feast of feasts, the greatest solemnity of the Christian calendar.

In the course of the Church year we observe two major periods of spiritual preparation, Advent and Lent. These two penitential seasons are strikingly dissimilar in many respects. The latter, for instance, is almost three times longer than the former, an indication that Easter is far more important than Christmas. Advent is filled with joyous longing, Lent with penitential seriousness. In Advent, joy and expectation increase day by day; in Lent penance and sorrow become steadily more intense. Advent would direct its appeal to the emotions; Lent challenges the will.

With genuine pedagogical tactfulness the Church prepares us for Easter in three steps: Pre-Lent, Lent, and Passiontide. Pre-Lent, a time of transition from the joyous spirit of Epiphany to one of reserve and recollection, conditions us for Ash Wednesday. Lent is a period of penance and heart-searching. Passiontide is devoted to the memory of Christ's suffering; it is indeed a mystical participation in our Savior's passion according to the words of St. Paul, "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross" (Gal. 2:19).

ANALYSIS OF THE EASTER SEASON

A. Preparation:

I. Pre-Lent:

	Stational church	Old Testament background	Spiritual import
1. Septuagesima	St. Lawrence	Adam's sin	Invited by God
2. Sexagesima	St. Paul	Noe's ark	The seed of God
3. Quinquagesima	St. Peter	Abraham's sacrifice	Divinely illumined

II. Lent. Light in conflict with darkness:

1. Defense: through conflict to victory and transfiguration (1st and 2nd week)
2. Attack: the stronger conquers the strong (3rd and 4th week)

III. The suffering Savior:
   1. Interior suffering (Passion Week)
   2. Christ's passion and death (Holy Week)

B. The Feast:
   1. The Lord is risen! (Easter)
      a) Renewing our own spiritual resurrection and baptism
      b) Looking forward to the Ascension, the Descent of the Spirit, and Pentecostal growth in divine life
   2. Christ has ascended (Ascension)
   3. Jesus sends His Spirit (Pentecost)

C. Epilog. The Sundays after Pentecost:
   1. An echo of Easter (the first few weeks in particular)
   2. Light struggling against darkness
   3. The Second Coming of Jesus (from the fifteenth Sunday to the end)

The design. The triumph of Christ and Christians over the powers of hell (the serpent).

The Discontinuance of the Alleluia

With Septuagesima a sudden change of mood occurs in the liturgy. One indication of this change is the disappearance of an acclamation from the Church's official prayers and chants. We children of a generation weak in faith do not notice it, but the faithful of the Middle Ages felt it keenly: the Alleluia is discontinued and will not be heard again until Holy Saturday.

During holy Mass the divine King, as He makes His solemn entrance at the Gospel, will no longer be greeted with a festive Alleluia. Neither will the eight canonical hours of the day be introduced by a joyous Alleluia; in its place we sing or say, "Praise be to You, O Lord, king of everlasting glory!" Certainly this is a beautiful greeting; nevertheless it is a substitute, one, however, which allows us to divine what the Church means by the acclamation it replaces.

What is meant by "Alleluia"? The expression comes from the Hebrew *Hallelu-Yah* and means "Praise Yahweh (God)." But even in the Old Testament it had already lost its literal meaning and had become a cry of joy. In the Book of Tobias we read, "In the streets (of the heavenly Jerusalem) Alleluia is sung" (Tob. 13:22). In this sense the first Christians received the word and used it as a song of joy, of heaven, and of resurrection. It is imbedded in the oldest strata of the liturgy; centuries pass by as it rises from the lips of Christians, and it will continue to be sung until the end of time, and then forever in the heavenly Jerusalem. The seer of the Apocalypse heard the triumphal song of "Alleluia resounding as the rushing of many waters, as the rolling of mighty thunder" (Apoc. 19:6).

In the first days of Christianity the Alleluia was used as a private ejaculatory prayer. The faithful prayed it at home, farmers behind the plow, craftsmen in their workshops. Sailors sang, "Let us begin our rowing song: Alleluia," and for Christian soldiers it served as a battle cry. With "Alleluia, the

Lord is risen!" the early Christians greeted each other on Easter morning. Even the dead were buried to the strains of Alleluia. What faith, what hope in resurrection underlies an Alleluia spoken at an open grave.

But the setting *par excellence* for the Alleluia is the liturgy. Until the time of St. Gregory the Great the Alleluia was restricted to Easter, when it served as the chief resurrection acclamation. At the present time it accompanies the believing soul through the whole year and stamps Christian life with the seal of joy, of resurrection, and of confidence in victory. The Church sings or says it repeatedly, e.g., at the beginning of each hour of prayer in the Office (eight times a day), and as a prelude to the Gospel at holy Mass. The latter instance, which may be likened to the cry of a herald at Christ's entrance for the Gospel, is numbered among the richest and finest choral hymns in the Roman liturgy.

Only in Pre-Lent and Lent, seasons devoted to penance for sin, does the Church refrain from voicing this cry of jubilation; not without emotion does she discontinue a practice to which her heart is so deeply attached. As to a dear friend Mother Church bids farewell to her beloved Alleluia on the Saturday before Septuagesima Sunday, when at the end of Vespers the acclamation is sung twice after the *Benedicamus Domino* and the choir responds with its twofold repetition following the *Deo gratias.*

In past centuries Pre-Lent was compared to the seventy-year captivity of the Jews and regarded as a time of suffering for sin. Durandus, a medieval liturgist, says, "We desist from saying Alleluia, the song chanted by angels, because we have been excluded from the company of the angels on account of Adam's sin. In the Babylon of our earthly life we sit by the streams, weeping as we remember Sion. For as the children of Israel in an alien land hung their harps upon the willows, so we too must forget the Alleluia song in the season of sadness, of penance, and bitterness of heart." (See Ps. 136, "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept. . . .") In some churches considerable ceremony accompanied the final Alleluia. Duran

dus tells us, "We parted from it as from a dear friend, one whom we embrace and kiss on lips, brow, and hand many times before he leaves on an extended journey."

Today, at first Vespers of Septuagesima Sunday, we sing the Alleluia for the last time. May its message remain impressed indelibly upon our hearts — we are a risen, a heavenly, a joyful people. Since baptism we are a *risen* race — never again allow yourself to die through sin. We are citizens of heaven; our feet touch the earth, but our hearts are with Christ on high, "Your conversation is in heaven." The mark of a genuine Christian life is a cheerful spirit. Like the sun a Christian radiates light and warmth, life and joy. Let us make real effort to be cheerful and joyful; ill-humor and bad temper must never mar our conduct. With joy in our hearts we should bring joy to others. The Church's daily Alleluia preaches this sermon.

Pre-Lent

"The Lord said to Adam: Of the tree which stands in the middle of paradise you shall not eat. As soon as you taste of it, you shall certainly die" (Ant. Magn.).

"The Lord said to Noe: The end of all creatures of flesh is in My mind. Make an ark of resin-wood, that in it the seed of every creature may be saved" (Ant. Magn.).

"The father of our faith, Abraham the Great, offered a holocaust upon the altar in place of his son" (Ant. Magn.).

To effect a transition from the joyous spirit of Christmas time to the sober and serious character of Lent, the Church has inserted a period of mental conditioning before Ash Wednesday. Pre-Lent, as this period may be called, consists of three Sundays, Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, i.e., the seventieth, the sixtieth, and the fiftieth day before Easter. These numbers do not, of course, result from accurate calculation, but because the first Sunday in Lent was called *Quadragesima* the three previous Sundays received the name of the nearest round figure.

A little reflection upon the liturgy of these three Sundays will show a unified and beautifully constructed underlying plan. The three great station churches, St. Lawrence, St. Paul,

The design. Adam is here represented as a child of God, radiant in his primitive innocence, enlivened and enlightened by the most Holy Trinity. Standing in the shade of the tree of life in paradise, he lifts his hands in prayer to the Father. Adam is, as it were, the trunk from which all men descend, e.g., Noe and Abraham. The former holds an ark with dove and raven close by; the latter carries fire for sacrifice. The star brings to mind the many Messianic promises with which Abraham was favored.

and St. Peter (arranged in ascending importance) indicate the extraordinary significance the Church attaches to these Sundays.

These three Sundays may be regarded as a prelude to the entire Easter season. In this prelude there are two main lines of emphasis:

1. Using the Old Testament as a mirror, the Church shows us the approaching mystery. Three great patriarchs rise up before us: Adam, Noe, Abraham. Listening to the fathers of the Church as an interpreting chorus, we quickly understand how they were prototypes of "future good things." Adam was indeed the originator of sin, but he is also the forerunner of the second father of mankind, Christ. Noe, saved by the ark, is a symbol of man's deliverance through the waters of baptism by the Church. Abraham's sacrifice serves as a premonition of Christ's death on the Cross. What a splendid triptych the Church places before us! Christ is the true Adam, the true Noe, the true Abraham.

2. The Gospels of these three Sundays focus their message upon a single theme: an invitation, a task, a goal. On the first Sunday we receive God's invitation to enter the vineyard of His kingdom. On the second Sunday the liturgy tells us about God's plans: the Church and the soul lie before Him as a great, unplanted field; the divine Sower will sow it with seed in order to gain an abundant harvest. How will His sowing affect us? Through the light of faith in baptism! Through the light of grace at Easter! Through the light of glory in heaven! Thus the Gospel pericopes of these three Sundays develop one basic course of spiritual instruction. This course was intended originally for catechumens; now it serves admirably well as a program for the approaching period of interior renewal.

The liturgy of Pre-Lent with its magnificently constructed Mass formularies dates from the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great; perhaps the saint himself was responsible for their composition. In content they reflect the period of the migration of nations, an age of war, tumult, and suffering.

THE WEEK OF SEPTUAGESIMA

Two well-defined topics dominate the entire week, the Parable of the Vineyard and the story of Adam. On Sunday and throughout the coming week the Church wants us to join her in living the Parable of the Vineyard. And in the Scripture readings the venerable figure of Adam stands before us daily.

Promoting the Faith. How much money, time, and effort the children of the world spend in promoting commercial interests! The advertising manager in every business concern ranks as one of the top officials. He works night and day devising new promotion techniques, new advertisements, new slogans to create the necessary popular demand for the company's goods. And with what fervor do the Communists propagate their ideas! They do not allow themselves to be discouraged by repeated failure. Undaunted and with singleness of purpose they labor to achieve the golden age of materialism. Pointing to them our Savior could repeat His observation, "The children of this world are in relation to their own generation more prudent than are the children of the light."

On these three Sundays, Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima, God is making a special effort to expand His kingdom and to propagate His teaching. His Holy Spirit seeks new members for the Body of Christ. Let us develop this theme somewhat in detail.

Bishops, priests, and lay leaders should devote the coming two and one half weeks entirely to home and foreign missions. The officials in charge of promoting the faith in dioceses and parishes should meet and discuss ways and means of reaching the hearts of men. Whether or not profane methods — placards, posters, neon signs, etc. — are to be used depends, of course, wholly upon the judgment of those controlling policy. Obviously, methods will vary greatly according to place and country. By this I am not implicitly approving the adoption of profane and secularistic extremes. But surely it is Christ's

will that we use all means humanly available to spread His doctrine throughout the world.

We must bring Christianity to the attention of our fellow men; every human being on the face of the earth is entitled to hear God's word. And this work must continue ceaselessly until the end of time. Christ gives no dispensation from this obligation. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." In this command to missionize Jesus certainly included the use of every psychological and educational aid which can be usefully employed to bring His teaching to men.

It does not by any means follow that great numbers will immediately accept the faith and become genuine converts. That depends upon two other important factors: a) the grace of God; b) man's free will. We cannot convert or persuade a single person to accept Christianity. Only he "whom the Father draws" comes to Christ. But it is our task to extend the invitation to others and to acquaint them with Christian doctrine.

And in this, I think, we still have much to do. Spreading the faith is an obligation incumbent upon us as Christians on the basis of our common priesthood, it is a duty arising more specifically from the sacrament of confirmation. There is much in common between this work and Catholic Action, an apostolate to which the Holy Father summons us. Throw open the doors of your hearts and your homes to your neighbors, all of them and not merely a select few, and invite them to enter; then teach them Christ's message.

Remember, however, that *success* in gaining converts is not the important thing; success lies in the hands of God alone. Methods, therefore, which employ questionable apologetics, emphasize emotion at the expense of reason, or aim at mass conversions with insufficient instruction are quite out of place. Only those approaches are valid which a) set forth the doctrine of Jesus clearly and intelligently, and b) allow the grace of God to produce its transforming effects. Hence it should be quite clear that our "advertising" methods will differ greatly

from those used by the business world. Nevertheless, this is no reason why the zeal firing our propaganda should be less intense. Our Savior speaks of zeal, not of methods, in the Parable of the Unjust Steward.

Now try to answer the following question, "How does Christ want me to carry out His commandment to missionize?"

In each of us there are many, many latent talents. What am I qualified to do? First of all, listen again to your Father's invitation: "Why do you stand here all day idle? Go you also into the vineyard." An ordered love of neighbor begins with prudent self-love. I myself must first follow the call in a perfect manner. I myself must accept and "keep what Christ has commanded." For me personally the coming Lent must be a period of religious education and spiritual self-discipline. At the very outset I must make sure that God's word elevates and sanctifies my own way of life, "lest perhaps after preaching to others I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor. 9:27).

Now come your neighbors, and begin with those who are nearest, e.g., relatives, friends, co-workers. At this point we may speak of "promotion techniques." Our friends and neighbors will certainly not be attracted by a blatant praise of Christianity, but they may by the genuine and unadulterated example of a true Christian life. You can preach best by your Christian behavior, by a Christ-like life. Heroic virtue is the most convincing and effective propaganda. Live blamelessly as a Christian and automatically you will have become the ideal preacher and apostle for your own peculiar environment. No, don't worry if your mission work is slow in bearing fruit; for whether and when your neighbors will accept the invitation is entirely in God's hands.

Next your wider environment, your neighbors in a broader sense. Again a vast potential. From chance meetings come new acquaintances; really it is God who sends them to us — on the train, during vacations, at meetings, etc. This class, moreover, includes all the members of our parish, members of Christ's Body even as ourselves! What "propagan-

da" have we in store for them? In addition to that outlined above there are two other magnificent means unknown to the world: love and prayer.

We *can* win people by friendliness, courtesy, a pleasing manner, cheerfulness! How affable and courteous business men, agents, and salesmen are obliged to be, even to customers who are most arrogant and rude! Why do we display Christian friendliness so rarely? And secondly, Christian charity. What tremendous influence it would have today in spreading Christ's teaching! No, I do not imply proselytizing by almsgiving. But by means of aid given out of genuine love men are most easily disposed for receiving the Gospel message. To put it more practically: every Catholic should have a poor person, a poor child, or a poor family for whom he cares, whom he visits, talks to, comforts, and whom on occasion he gladdens with some special gift. Everyone can do that, even children, and teenagers too.

We may not forget prayer. If a person becomes a Christian it is due solely to God's grace. But we may obtain this grace from God's heart by fervent, patient prayer. Among the techniques for promoting the kingdom of God, prayer perhaps is the most effective.

Remember: Septuagesima is "Propagation of the Faith" Sunday.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Station at St. Lawrence

God invites us to enter the vineyard of His Kingdom

From the Roman Martyrology: "The Sunday of Septuagesima; from this day on the praise of God with Alleluia is discontinued."

1. Septuagesima — Seventy. Whatever the historical explanation for this name may be, the term itself links the Sunday to the central feast of the Church year, Easter. Accordingly it forms the first step in the process of preparation for

Easter. During the Middle Ages, when allegory stood in good repute, people frequently associated this period with the seventy-year Babylonian captivity of the Old Testament. Like the Jews we now hang our alleluia-harps on the willow trees.

The Easter season must affect our life more profoundly than Christmas did. Now we are to be transformed into a new nation; we are to be baptized anew and become God's new handiwork. The morning of this great day of conversion has arrived. We can understand, then, why the Church hastens to give us a program for the coming weeks.

She places before us five considerations: a) we must realize once again that we are sinners; our first objective must be to acquire a deep consciousness of sin. Therefore, as we enter God's house, the Church puts these words on our lips, "The groans of death have surrounded me, the pains of hell have laid hold on me" (Intr.). In the Office we read of Adam's fall. Yet this awareness of sin is not without hope, for we are likewise conscious of redemption, "Then in my distress I called upon the Lord, and from His holy temple He heard my voice." Already from a distance we see the gleam of the Easter moon.

b) The second consideration is God's invitation. God, the Father and Lord of the vineyard, is calling for workers. How consoling! It is never too late. He directs His call to every age group; whether you are a child, a young boy or girl, a man or woman, or one advanced in years — you are now invited. Accept the summons!

c) Today we are given a preview of our task as Christians. It is not a life of ease, of *dolce far niente*, but hard work in the heat of day, a close contest on the race track. And in order to teach us this lesson vividly, the Church takes us to the grave of the great fighter, St. Lawrence. His battle for Christ on the grill should become our model.

d) During the struggle the wreath of victory beckons; the laborer deserves his pay. The Gospel penny is eternal life, the unwithering wreath of heavenly glory. If the children of this world expend so much effort to obtain a

garland that withers, what ought we not do to acquire an eternal crown?

e) Finally the Church sets a warning sign at the entrance to the Easter cycle. You are now approaching that which is most sacred: baptism and Eucharist, the heart of the paschal mystery. Woe unto you, if your life fails to correspond to God's will; then you will fare as did the fathers in the desert. They too received a baptism and a heavenly food, but they died in the wilderness, they never saw the Promised Land.

2. Holy Mass (Circumdederunt). We gather at the grave of St. Lawrence, the approach to the martyr's tomb creating the proper spirit. What difference between last Sunday's Introit and today's! There joy, a picture of the Epiphany, here a dramatic initiation into the season of penance! Who is praying the *Introit*? It is Lawrence who is praying, Lawrence on the grill "in the groans of death and the torments of hell"; it is Christ who is praying, Christ, as He begins His bitter suffering; it is the Church and the soul of man who are praying, for the Church and the soul will be joined both to Lawrence and Christ by mortifying the flesh in the coming Lenten season. This Introit epitomizes the whole period of Lent, and already now permits a glimpse of Easter, "He heard my voice from His holy temple."

Humbly we accept suffering as punishment for our sins (*Coll.*), while in the same breath we beg deliverance. The sentiments expressed presuppose a time of great distress; the prayer could well have been occasioned by the evils attendant upon the great migrations—(are conditions different today?).

The *Epistle* outlines our Lenten program. Christian life is a battle; two warriors are struggling for my soul, Christ and the devil. Christ must win. Lent is a period of conflict: we must fight our battles anew. By Easter the beginning of final victory must be ours. But let us look more deeply: see, Christ, the new David, steps into the arena to meet Goliath. His victory includes ours. In His triumph that of Lawrence too is contained. The figure may be extended to the great conflict of spirits which began with the exaltation of Lucifer

and will not end until the end of time.

The Epistle contains still other thought units: the two paschal sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, are at the heart of the coming season; through them the Church will be rejuvenated and renewed. Today we are warned against misuse of these sacraments; baptism and the Eucharist without moral conduct pleasing to God lead to destruction. In the *Gradual* man again stands in dire need of redemption, he is the "poor man" who looks up from the deep dungeon of sin to his Redeemer. How touching the *De Profundis* is as an expression of man's longing for heaven!

The *Gospel* parable of the workers in the vineyard is a solemn invitation to begin work today in God's kingdom of the soul. Why do you stand there idle? Do not look at other people; follow the call yourself! As the sacrifice proceeds I receive the strength needed for battle; with holy Communion I obtain in advance the wreath of victory with Lawrence, an earnest of the penny

The design attempts to illustrate Septuagesima's leading themes. At the bottom we see what happened in paradise: our first parents are driven from the garden by the cherub with flaming sword. Behind them remain the tree of life and the lily of innocence. In their path are thorns and thistles, and beside them a hissing serpent. But there is still room for hope — already the Sun of redemption shines from afar. In the center picture our heavenly Father is inviting all of us into His vineyard. At top the station saint, Lawrence, encourages us to fight the holy battle for the good of God's kingdom by waving to us with crown and palm.

of heaven. Already the transfiguring light enveloping Lawrence is beginning to shine upon me.

The *Secret* was cast from the common mold; may God receive our gifts and prayers as a pledge of responding to us and purifying us through the heavenly mysteries. The Eucharist is, as it were, God's shining face which turns towards us and effects our salvation and deliverance (*Comm.*). May the sacred repast bring strength to the faithful! For this reason they should always cherish a desire for the Eucharist and receive it frequently (*Postc.*).

3. Scripture Reading (Gen. 1:1–13). In the early Middle Ages three lessons from the first Book of Moses were solemnly read in choir at the end of Vespers. Thereby the Church wished to emphasize the significance of beginning anew the course of Scripture lessons as well as to express reverence for the old Law. With special devotion, then, we open to the first page of Genesis and read the first half of the creation account:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; the earth was waste and void; darkness covered the abyss, and the spirit of God was stirring above the waters.

God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good. God separated the light from the darkness, calling the light Day and the darkness Night. And there was evening and morning, the first day. . . ."

This is not the proper place to discuss what is meant by the "days" of creation. With gratitude we accept God's revelation, the kernel and essence of which is the dogma of creation. However, let us not overlook the beautiful symmetry displayed in the description. The six days are divided into two groups; the first three days show the work of separation, the last three that of ornamentation. In both groups a descending order is followed, viz., light, air, water, earth.

4. Divine Office. At Matins the readings from Genesis and the Gospel on the laborers in the vineyard are the two focal points to which all thoughts, like the radii of an ellipse, converge. All the responsories are from Genesis; this is an indication that the Church wants our attention to be riveted upon the doctrine of creation and the fall. Yesterday's Magnificat antiphon, culled from Genesis, is brief and to the point:

"The Lord said to Adam: Of the tree which stands in the middle of paradise you shall not eat. As soon as you taste of it, you shall certainly die."

Here we stand, at the beginning of the story of salvation. It is the point from which all pain and sorrow goes forth upon the earth, likewise all salvation and happiness. Our thoughts pass to another tree in the midst of the kingdom of God, the tree upon which the second Adam died. From this tree comes fruit that contains God's life within itself. The Magnificat antiphon links the Bible reading directly to the Lenten season. During the day the Church occupies our minds with the Gospel. She makes an effort to dramatize the parable by distributing the main events and words over the corresponding hours of the day. At Lauds, *primo mane*, we are engaged by God to work in the vineyard. At Prime God makes a contract with us and sends us out to work. At Terce, *tertia hora*, He invites the stragglers. At None, toward evening, He calls us to receive our pay. Vespers are the eleventh hour.

Two resolutions. The Scripture lessons describe the work of creation; daily the ferial Vesper hymn takes its inspiration from the Bible story and applies its message spiritually. Resolution: this week we will reflect carefully upon the individual days of creation following these hymns as our guide. The Gospel provides material for a second resolution. The parable of the workers in the vineyard is easily aligned with the Day Hours of the Divine Office. Beginning today we will give greater attention to these periods of prayer, and the theme that is proper to each.

5. The Sunday. Guided by divine inspiration Moses sacramentalized the week by making it a magnificent symbol of the work of creation. The seven days of work and rest are an imitation of as well as a participation in God's creative activity. The Sabbath, the Lord's day, typifies the eternal day of divine rest.

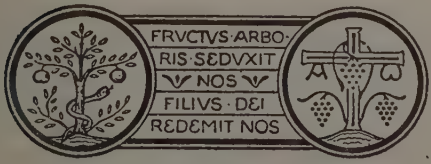
Christianity introduced a radical change by hallowing the beginning rather than the end of the seven day sequence. The Jew works and earns a day of rest as his reward. The Christian consecrates the initial day of the week as a firstfruit to God and thereby sanctifies all that follows. For this reason the

weekdays are called *feria*, i.e., feast days. Sunday is dedicated to the most Blessed Trinity (therefore the Credo, Gloria, Athanasian Creed). God the Father, to whom the creation of the world is ascribed, receives special honor. On Sunday Jesus rose from the dead; the first Christians therefore called Sunday the Lord's Day. On Sunday too the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the infant Church.

Our most profound insights into the meaning of Sunday derive from the Easter mystery. Easter is the feast of redemption *par excellence,* here objective and subjective redemption coalesce. In the Cross and resurrection the work of redemption is consummated; baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist are Easter sacraments. Every Sunday brings a renewal of baptism. Lastly, Sunday is a day of rest, a foretaste of the parousia.

The Sundays of the year play an important role in the expansion of God's kingdom; on these days God exercises His pastoral work for the care of souls in a special manner. Do not miss the sacramental power inherent in this day consecrated to God. The special Sunday hymn reflects the work assigned to the first day, the creation of light; our thoughts dwell on divine light and spiritual darkness:

Night comes with all its darkling fears.
Regard Thy people's prayers and tears
Lest, sunk in sin and whelmed with strife,
They lose the gift of endless life.



The design. "The fruit of the tree (in paradise) seduced us, the Son of God has redeemed us."

MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

The second day of creation: the streams of God's love

1. The Sunday Gospel. On the weekdays of Pre-Lent the feasts of saints are celebrated as they occur. The only difference in the Mass is the substitution of the Tract for the Alleluia. When no saint is commemorated, the Mass is of the preceding Sunday, with the Tract omitted. (The Tract always lends a certain solemnity, this is lacking on a weekday with no feast.)

In other respects too the Church now seeks to repeat Sunday themes more frequently and thus impress them upon our minds. For example, daily at sunset she sings an excerpt from the Sunday Gospel, e.g., "These last have worked a single hour, and you have put them on a level with us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day" (Magn. Ant.). Thus the Gospel of God inviting us echoes in our souls during the whole week. Are you ready to answer the call?

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 1:14–2:3). To a greater degree than in past weeks the Scripture readings are related to personal, internal purification. The responsories have a similar slant; they are now always culled from the Genesis story, and what is sung, especially if it echoes the reading, must find application in what we do and think.

Today we cover the second part of the creation story. On the fourth day God created the lights in the sky, the sun, moon, and stars; on the fifth day He made the creatures of the air and the sea; on the sixth day land animals, and last of all man. On the seventh day God rested from His work. Again the story is recounted in descending fashion: light, water, air, and earth. Now, however, the work of embellishing the universe forms the topic. The region of light is adorned with heavenly bodies (fourth day); the waters are enlivened by fish and the air by the birds (fifth day); the dry land with animals, and finally man, the crown of creation, is placed on earth (sixth day). It is easy to outline this artistic arrangement:

A. Introduction: statement of theme
B. Creation in two phases of three days each:
   1. Work of separation:
      a) light from darkness
      b) the upper from the lower waters
      c) dry land from the sea
   2. Work of ornamentation:
      a) sun, moon, stars
      b) birds, fish
      c) animals, man
C. Conclusion: the divine Sabbath

The liturgical significance of the Genesis account stems from the fact that the story of creation is imbedded in a week of seven days, the last of which is described as a day of rest hallowed by God. Thus divine activity is presented as a pattern for human life, a life that is to run its course in a sequence of six days of work and one of rest and sanctification. The chief purpose of the Biblical account is to teach the sanctification of the Sabbath; God Himself is our model as He hallows and blesses a day of rest by withdrawing it from the service of men. One point more, Scripture has nothing to report concerning the end of the Sabbath; it continues on indefinitely and is a figure of eternity, even as the six days are a figure of time.

3. Symbolism of Monday. On the second day of creation God separated the upper from the lower waters, i.e., the waters above the firmament from those on earth, according to Semitic cosmology. Note how God is putting order into primeval chaos. In the ordering of the waters the Vesper hymn sees a symbol of the streams of grace which flow into our souls from the ocean of God's love, and there create order. Sin brought disorder; the "ancient error," *error vetus,* is ever plotting "new deception." May the light of faith burn brightly in our souls; may it banish darkness, "vain delusion and false deception!"

What other spiritual themes are proper to Monday? As such, Monday has no special message but we can easily deduce a moral peculiar to the day from its position in the week. After the day of rest a week of toil begins. Monday, the first day of

work, greets us with, "On, into the battle with a courageous and joyful heart!" Joyful as a bridegroom, strong as a hero, I run through the course of the week — to use an expression from Psalm 18 (Prime). This joyful, confident tone can be noticed in most of the Hours; the invitatory already puts us in the proper spirit, *"Venite, exsultemus Domino!"* Not with a sour disposition but with joyful courage let us begin our week. Matins show us a picture of success; Lauds resound with joy; Prime is especially significant today as the week's morning prayer. On, into the battle with a courageous and joyful heart!

TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

The third day of creation: virtues are the plant life of the soul

1. Sunday Gospel. At sunset we pray, "Now the householder answered: Friend, I do you no injustice. Did you not contract with Me for a penny? Take what is yours and leave" (Magn. Ant.). I will not chide God if He seemingly apportions to me a worse lot in life than to others. In this too I must show confidence in God and love, accepting whatever happens gratefully and joyfully from the hands of my heavenly Father.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 2:4–25). After the creation account there follows a section which tells the story of our first parents and their children (Gen. 2:4—4:26). The development is natural, logical, and it is easy to follow the author as he describes a) the creation of man, b) the fall of Adam and Eve,

The design. The peacock is a symbol of immortality; Christians become spiritually immortal through the holy Eucharist. (From a drawing in the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, beginning of the second century.)

c) the murder of Abel. Part two of the narrative, the sin of our first parents, ranks first in importance; part one is introductory, while the conclusion to the story describes the effect of original sin upon the first generation. Today's Breviary lessons cover a number of very important subjects, e.g., the creation of the first man, paradise with its two trees, God's command, and the formation of Eve.

Of special note are the two trees in paradise. The tree of life, whose fruit had the mysterious power to maintain earthly life, prefigured the blessed Eucharist; the tree of knowledge has its counterpart in the tree of atonement, the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The mysterious creation of Eve also has its liturgical significance, for her formation from the side of Adam typified a relationship between Christ and the Church. On the Cross the divine Adam sleeps the sleep of death; from His side flows Eve, the Church. (Blood and water are symbols of the two principal sacraments.)

3. Symbolism of Tuesday. The Vesper hymn first refers to the Biblical narrative of the third day when God parted the waters of the sea from those above the firmament and assigned to each definite and permanent bounds. The second verse continues the story with attention centered upon the plant world. We see the seed as it sprouts, produces beautiful blossoms, and is blessed with rich fruit which provides man and beast welcome nourishment. In four words the poet summarizes the value and importance of the plant world: seed, blossom, fruit, nourishment.

The plant world seems closer to God than the world of animals because the latter is more directly affected by the curse of original sin. The liturgy looks with love and favor upon plants and flowers. How can I give the plant world a part in the liturgy? (Adornment for the altar, Ember days, wheat, wine, oil, the golden rose. . . .) In the natural beauty of plants and flowers the Vesper hymn sees a symbol of the soul adorned with virtues. Sin and vice turn the soul into a parched desert devoid of life. Apart from this consideration one can hardly speak of any mystic meaning for Tuesday. It has no special

liturgical theme. Like the other days of the week it is a day of conflict: it stands between joyous Monday and serious Wednesday.

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

The fourth day of creation: the sun a figure of Christ

1. **Sunday Gospel.** At sunset we again sing a text from the Sunday Gospel, "Take what is yours and leave; for I am good, says the Lord." Satisfaction with my state in life marks me as a true Christian. God is "good": we must acknowledge this with grateful hearts. Sing the Magnificat in a spirit of deepest gratitude.

2. **Scripture Reading (Gen. 3:1–10).** Few passages in Holy Scripture are more important than today's lessons on the fall of our first parents. No reading from the Bible during this entire week is richer theologically. The lesson on original sin is indispensable in any preparation for Lent. Because of its significance we quote at length: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. He said to the woman: Did God say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden? The woman answered the serpent: Of the fruit of all the trees in the garden we may eat; but 'Of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden,' God said, 'you shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'

"But the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Now the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for the knowledge it would give. She took of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband

The design. "The just man shall flourish like the palm tree" (Ps. 91:13).

and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves coverings. When they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

3. Symbolism of Wednesday. In the Vesper hymn we have a magnificent description of heaven's glory:

O God, whose hand hath spread the sky
And all its shining hosts on high,
And, painting it with fiery light,
Made it so beauteous and so bright.

Gratefully we should receive the visible evidence of God's greatness as manifested in the sun, moon, and stars. The alternation between night and day, week and month, due to the heavenly bodies, is of immeasurable benefit to man. We should try to realize the value of these natural good things, and in them praise the providence of God!

Christian art and symbolism see constant inspiration in the visible heavens, e.g., the sun is a common figure for Christ (cf.Ps. 18): "He has pitched a tent there for the sun, which comes forth like the groom from his bridal chamber. . . ." In the liturgy symbolism of this type occurs very frequently. The moon is used as a figure of the Mother of God; and the stars are associated with heaven and eternity.

Wednesday's spiritual theme. As the middle day of the week it marks the high point in the weekly conflict. Reflections on sin are common in the Divine Office. And since ancient times the memory of Judas' betrayal has ever cast its shadow. For this reason many families observe voluntary fast and abstinence today.

THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Birds and fish: creatures and symbols

1. Sunday Gospel. As the sun is sinking in the west the Church sings, "Have I not a right to do what I please? Or are you envious because I am generous?, says the Lord." Envy is

a vice. Envy robbed the first man of paradise. Envy caused the first murder. Keep the door of your heart tightly closed against this vicious intruder.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 3:11–24). Again a remarkable passage, Adam's trial after the first sin and God's verdict: "And Adam said, 'The woman You placed at my side gave me fruit from the tree and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'Why have you done this?" The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me and I ate.'

Then the Lord God said to the serpent:

'Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals,
and among all beasts of the field;
On your belly shall you crawl,
dust shall you eat,
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
between your seed and her seed;
He shall crush your head,
and you shall lie in wait for his heel.'

To the woman He said:

'I will make great your distress in childbearing;
in pain shall you bring forth children;
For your husband shall be your longing,
though he have dominion over you.'

And to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to your

The design. The divine Orpheus.

wife, and have eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat:

Cursed be the ground because of you;
in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life;
Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you,
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
Since out of it you were taken;
for dust you are and unto dust you shall return.' "

The first promise of a Redeemer, implicit in this passage, is the reason why it is called the protoevangel, i.e., the first joyful message. With this prophecy the work of redemption begins. It is a thrilling experience to discover how the Old Testament picture of the Redeemer becomes clearer and clearer; here in faint outline it makes its first appearance — Satan will be defeated by a descendant of the woman.

3. Symbolism of Thursday. The hymn takes its inspiration from the multitude of creatures filling the sea and the air, creatures which we are encouraged to admire. In visible creation we should see marks of God revealing Himself. What happiness St. Francis of Assisi experienced in beholding his "brothers and sisters!" For me too these creatures were made, and they can speak to me of God and things divine. Fish and birds are common liturgical symbols. Christ is represented as a large fish, and Christians as little ones. Of birds the dove is the symbol of the Holy Ghost and of souls in union with God. The cock signifies vigilance, the peacock, immortality and resurrection.

Today's Vesper hymn lifts our thoughts from the creature plane to the divine life of grace. As fish live in the water, so the child of God is cleansed and lives in the waters of baptism. And as the bird soars into the air, the Christian soul should raise itself to celestial heights, "Let none despair through sin's distress, Be none puffed up with boastfulness, That contrite hearts be not dismayed, Nor haughty souls in ruin laid."

The Office on Thursday bears a special stamp because it is

the day of the institution of the holy Eucharist. Today Prime is devoted entirely to the Eucharist (cf.Ps. 22 and Ps. 71). It is an Hour which may well be regarded as "the Breviary's Corpus Christi." At Matins Psalm 68 reminds us of Christ's sacred passion and death, a theme which occurs repeatedly in popular meditation books.

4. Animal Symbolism of the Ancient Church. One of the characteristics of Christian art, as it is preserved in the catacombs and in ancient basilicas, is its predilection for symbols. Animals and plants occur repeatedly as signs for the supernatural. Two major themes may be easily recognized, a) life after death, b) the Church's cult; often the two are interwoven.

This knowledge is not without practical value for us, for it shows us on the one hand how the first Christians lived the liturgy and on the other hand how they had anchored themselves in the hope of life beyond the grave. To inculcate these attitudes and to raise present day Christians out of sentimental, subjective piety and earthly attitudes is one of the aims of the liturgical movement. Fostering interest in the ancient Christian symbols, therefore, rests upon solid patristic and liturgical foundations.

This week, which is devoted to the story of creation, is a most appropriate time to study the Church's traditional symbols. With our forefathers we will again look upon the peacock as a symbol of immortality, and also as a symbol of the divine life that we draw from the Eucharist (the peacock pecking at grapes); the dove will represent the soul, similarly nourished by divine life; in a lamb we will immediately recognize the Lamb of God, and Christians who follow the Good Shepherd; the fish, although frequently used as a figure of

The design. The eagle represents the triumph of Christ and Christians over death.

Christ and Christians, is also a symbol of baptism and the Eucharist; the phoenix, burning himself to death and rising rejuvenated from the ashes, is a symbol of the resurrection; the eagle is a figure of Christians in their flight to God; the stag, panting for the streams of water, brings to mind the refreshment bestowed on earth by baptism and Eucharist and in heaven by the fountain of eternal glory.

Here we may also mention the "Orpheus symbol" derived from pagan mythology. By his music Orpheus enchanted the wild beasts. According to ancient Christian symbolism, Christ by the music of His teaching attracts and transforms men, who in their passions resemble animals.

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Sixth day of creation: man, the image of God

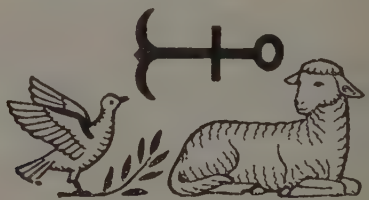
1. **Scripture Reading (Gen. 4:1–16).** In the tragic story of the world's first fratricide we find two important truths for the understanding of Sacred Scripture: a) Sacred Scripture does not give the history of the world, but the history of salvation; it does not aim to describe noteworthy events, but sketches the development of the work of redemption. The entire Old Testament is a preparation for the Redeemer. Today's story, too, is part of this program. Who will be the ancestor of the coming Redeemer? One naturally thinks of Adam's first-born son! No, it is Seth, after Abel's death. This is the ultimate reason for including the story.

b) The other important truth is this: already during Adam's lifetime the separation of mankind began which will last forever, the separation between the children of God and the children of the world. Cain and Abel are the ancestors and founders of two kingdoms: the kingdom of good and the kingdom of evil.

2. **Symbolism of Friday.** The hymn recalls the creation of animals and points out their purpose, viz., to serve man. Again the Bible gives us a splendid insight into the world of nature, one which lifts us up to the Eternal. See how marvelously God's providence is shown us in the animal world! How perfectly animals fulfill the role assigned them, how wonderfully they develop their natural powers! When He wished to

teach by way of comparison our Savior Himself drew upon the animal kingdom, "Be therefore wise as serpents, and guileless as doves."

To a greater degree than plants, animals come under the curse of original sin; and animal instincts serve as a figure for man's lower nature. On this account human passions and sinful impulses have been compared to worms, wild beasts, and dragons. The Vesper hymn implicitly makes this comparison when it beseeches God to expel evil passions from our souls. Friday, furthermore, is the day of Christ's death. Prime brings Christ to our minds in His hour of utter abandonment (Ps. 21). And there are other reminders in the Office and in popular piety of our Savior's death.



SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA

Seventh day of creation: God rests

1. Scripture Reading (Gen. 5:1–32). Holy Scripture continues with the family history of Seth's children, the children of God. This chapter lists ten generations from Seth to Noe. These were the bearers of revelation, the ancestors of the Redeemer. The family tree begins with Adam, "When Adam was one hundred and thirty years old, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and he called him Seth. Adam lived eight hundred years after the birth of Seth, and had other sons and daughters. The whole lifetime of Adam was nine hundred and thirty years; then he died."

The design. The combination of lamb, dove, and anchor gives rise to these thoughts: through the sacrifice (Lamb) on the Cross (anchor), the soul (dove) attains peace (olive branch).

The Bible tells us nothing further about Adam's life. How startling are the words, "He died!" God's judgment is fulfilled, "Dust you are and unto dust you shall return."

Three of the patriarchs receive special mention: Seth, Enos, and Henoch, because of their exceptional virtue. Of Henoch Holy Scripture says, "When Henoch was sixty-five years old he became the father of Mathusale. Henoch walked with God three hundred years after the birth of Mathusale, and had other sons and daughters. The whole lifetime of Henoch was three hundred and sixty-five years. Henoch walked with God; and he was seen no more because God took him." Of all the others the Bible simply says, "He died," but of Henoch, "God took him." As a reward for his trustful adherence to God, he, like Elias, did not die, but was rapt away to some heavenly place. He was a preacher of justice, a herald of penance and judgment to his godless contemporaries. He opposed the corruption of morals by preventing marriages between Cain's descendants and those of Seth. Further references to Henoch may be found in Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14-15.

"When Lamech was one hundred and eighty-two years old, he became the father of a son, and called him Noe, saying, 'This one shall bring us comfort from our work and from the toil of our hands in the ground which the Lord cursed.'" This passage is not devoid of Messianic implications.

2. Symbolism of Saturday. In the Vesper hymn there is practically no allusion to the day as such because Vespers belong to Sunday and the Jewish Sabbath had yielded to the Christian Lord's Day. We may, however, associate the idea of Sabbath rest with the prayer sentiments of the final stanza as we praise God "Who lives and reigns eternally." To this theology of rest we Occidentals should give greater emphasis in our Sunday observance. We need contemplative rest in order to permit God's kingdom to grow in our souls. We are far too busy, far too occupied with external activity — to the detriment of spiritual values.

In memory of the Mosaic Sabbath the Eastern Church keeps the last day of the week somewhat as a holy day. Perhaps it was later dedicated to the Mother of God for this very reason. In the liturgy and in popular piety Saturday is Mary's day.

The Office, "Beata Virgo Maria in Sabbato," is prescribed for Saturdays when no feast of any kind occurs.

In the Roman ferial Office the dominant theme on Saturday is that of the *End*. The last day of the week should remind us of the end of life and of the end of the world. This thought is present in every Hour, repeatedly finding new expression. At Matins, as we reflect upon divine Providence, we view history and life from the vantage point of eternity and worship God who is faithful, merciful, and longsuffering. At Lauds and Prime God appears before us as the just judge who at the end of time will reward and punish. At Terce one can feel a gentle longing for heaven; Sext sees creation finished after six days of work; Psalm 103, a highly poetic hymn upon the creation of the world, should be said slowly and devoutly. At None we look into the abyss of hell. With overtones of gratitude Vespers survey the week of redemption just completed, while Compline serves as life's evening prayer. Saturday's theme then is: **The End!**

3. The Eve of Sunday. Saturday Vespers are part of the Sunday Office, and Sunday motifs are never entirely absent. Today we hear two illustrious preachers, Paul and Noe. In the chapter Paul begins his autobiography, and in the Magnificat antiphon Noe gives his message standing before the ark, "The Lord said to Noe: The end of all creatures of flesh is in My mind. Make an ark of resin-wood, that in it the seed of every creature may be saved." The Church and baptism are here prefigured.

THE WEEK OF SEXAGESIMA

During the past week the Church invited us to work and struggle in God's kingdom (Sunday Epistle and Gospel). This week she goes a step farther; in the Parable of the Sower she shows us God at work and makes clear our duty to cooperate. The divine Sower scatters His seed upon the ground, but it depends upon the ground whether or not His seed will produce. This central message is supplemented by the words and

example of two illustrious men, Noe and Paul, the one from the Old Testament, the other from the New.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

Station at St. Paul

Noe, Paul, Christ

Underlying today's liturgical message is a fine, artistic plan. As we begin our meditation, we may imagine ourselves entering a splendid basilica. First, in the dark vestibule, we see the sower of the flesh, Noe. He typifies nature, which is the prerequisite and at the same time the figure of the supernatural; in the image of ark and flood we see the redemption implied and prefigured. A few steps farther and we enter the nave of the basilica; before us stands the sower of the word, Paul. He embodies faith, which indeed is a part of the supernatural, but does not yet represent the essence of God's kingdom. Finally we come to the sanctuary; here the Sower of life, Christ, meets us and gives us grace.

1. The Sower of the Flesh. Noe, the one just man amid universal godlessness! A powerful figure! We see him building the ark through many years, at God's command, while his contemporaries revel in vice and mock at his admonitions. At Matins St. Ambrose gives us a few penetrating observations on the Bible story:

"In order to indicate the reprobate condition of all men then alive as well as to remind us of God's love, the sacred text reads: 'Noe found grace before the Lord.' The very words show how the wickedness of some does not blot out the sanctity of those who are virtuous. It was, as we know, Noe, the Just, who was preserved in order to continue the human race. Not because of noble birth, but because of the merit of his holiness and piety is he praised. The real nobility of this good man is his nobility in virtue. For as the human race produces human beings, so a pious soul produces virtue. Among men families are ennobled by descent; beauty of soul, however, depends wholly upon the light of virtue."

Scripture Reading (Gen. 6:1-2). The holy Bible relates the sad conclusion to Adam's family history. By marriage between the children of Cain and the children of Seth immorality became universal. God therefore decreed to strike the world with judgment by means of a flood. We should read this passage of holy Scripture very carefully. The various responsories at Matins treat of the flood and direct our thinking to this topic. The deluge account is our night meditation in the vestibule; at sunrise there stands before us:

2. The Sower of the Word. Today we pilgrimage to the grave of the great St. Paul and there with the universal Church offer the holy Sacrifice. Only a few Sunday Mass formularies have such an intimate connection with the saint of the station. We are not merely standing at the grave of St. Paul; according to the spirit of the liturgy he is in our very midst, our intercessor (Collect), our preacher (Epistle).

Today and throughout the whole year Paul is the sower of the Word. Almost every Sunday he scatters the seed of God's message in the souls of Christians. And what does he sow to-

The design gives the three sowers featured in today's liturgy: Noe, with his three sons, the ark, rainbow, and vine; Paul, the great herald of Christ; and our Blessed Savior who is both the Sower of good seed and wheat to be eaten in the Eucharist.

CHRIST

we accompany,

him we obey.

he is the lord of light,

and the author of all

salvation +

day? The example of his life in the service of Christ, in its breadth and height and depth. Its breadth: how he worked, suffered, and sacrificed for Christ! How ashamed we should be to do so little! Its height: he gives us a glimpse of his intimacy with God; that degree of union we can hardly attain, but we can surely go farther than we have. Its depth: he was a human being, subject to temptations; but grace triumphed over weakness. The apostle's words should be our guiding norm, "Strength is made perfect in weakness." Take advantage of this coming Lent to reform your life in its breadth and height and depth.

3. The Sower of Life. The real sower is Christ, who sows grace. How? In the Eucharist He is at the same time both Sower and Seed. Thus the Church points out her greatest means of spiritual renewal during the coming weeks. The divine Sower is passing through His field; it is springtime in the souls of men. He sows His seed — Himself — in your heart.

Your task is to be receptive. Do not be a road upon which the whole world wanders, do not be stony ground (unreceptive and inconstant), do not be a thorny bush (lustful and worldly). Be good ground! And God will sow the seed of self-mastery and discipline in your body. He will sow the seed of faith in your mind, and the seed of His grace in your soul.

4. Holy Mass (Exsurge). The *Introit* is a marrow-piercing cry! (Was it caused originally by the scourge of war?) Today it is Mother Church pleading for souls. From our heart and lips the cry of unredeemed mankind rises to God on high; paganism is voicing its plight at the threshold of the church of the apostle of the Gentiles.

Collect: rarely does a Sunday collect refer to the station saint. In the *Epistle* the great apostle Paul sketches for us an inspiring self-portrait. It is as if he took us by the hand and said: This is the way you must live, this is your battle, your Lenten campaign. *Tract*: may the coming season of Lent serve to "heal the breaches" disfiguring the soul as a result of past sins. *Gospel*: Lent is springtime for the soul, for during this holy season the divine Sower scatters His graces, particularly the

"wheat of the Eucharist," more abundantly than otherwise upon the plowed field of the human heart. Today in the Sacrifice proper the Gospel becomes reality as the Eucharistic wheat kernels sink into the soil of our souls; Christ dies in us and with us, and rises again; despite our weakness, the "strength of Christ" can "dwell" in us.

The *Secret* is short but rich in meaning; the offering we have made will have two effects, viz., protection (negative effect), enlivenment (positive effect). By the *oblatum sacrificium* both our sacrifices in the offertory and Christ's sacrifice in the consecration are undoubtedly understood. The two processional chants are indeed most appropriate as pilgrim songs: "Direct my footsteps in Your path, that my feet may not go astray" (*Off.*); I shall go to the altar of God" (*Comm.*). The *Postcommunion* asks God to give us the grace to serve Him "by living in a manner pleasing to Him."

5. The Day Hours. Again this Sunday the liturgy keeps the Gospel before us throughout the day in order to have us live the parable in drama form. Now it is very interesting to note what parts of the Gospel are emphasized. At sunrise we hear the introduction and the opening words of the parable, for Mother Church wants us to know that the holy drama is beginning. "The Sower went out to sow His seed." Christ takes the leading role.

In the next three Hours (Prime to Sext) we have three more passages from the parable; the liturgy, however, is silent concerning the unfruitful seed, it speaks only of good seed and abundant fruit. How helpful in applying the passages! The liturgy thinks first of the faithful and the good, not of sinners. "The seed fell on good ground and brought forth fruit in patience" (Prime). "They who keep the word of God in a perfect and good heart bring forth fruit in patience" (Terce). Notice in particular how patience is emphasized in both antiphons; it is as if the Church would say: The best ground for the seed of God is a life of Christ-like patience. "The seed fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, others sixtyfold!" (Sext). Not without reason does the chant stop with the seed that brought forth sixtyfold — we are at Sext!

"If truly you wish to be rich, brethren, love true riches"

(None). This passage is not from the Gospel, but from the homily of St. Gregory. Thus the four little Hours with their antiphons picture a flourishing Christian life. In the evening the Church whispers to her children, "To you it is given to know. . . ."

6. God's Word is Seed. A Meditation. The Sundays of Pre-Lent are recruiting days for the kingdom of heaven. God calls, invites, sows the seed, and waits for a goodly yield. The parable of the seed occupied our attention each past year; in the seed we saw a figure of grace, God's grace, which is inwardly effective, but which needs man's cooperation.

Yet, if we reflect more deeply upon Christ's explanation of the parable, we make a discovery that is most helpful to movements which foster Bible reading, viz., the seed is the word of God. Jesus is telling us that the words of the Holy Spirit have an interior, or better, a *sacramental* power.

Let us probe deeper into what is meant by the "word of God." God's word is an expression of His will, a revelation of Himself. For us men words are means whereby thoughts, feelings, and wishes are communicated to one another. What God thinks, feels, and wills for us He likewise communicates to us by the use of words.

But did God actually ever speak to man? Certainly. In paradise He spoke with Adam face to face. Upon Sinai God announced His commandments in person before all the people. He often spoke to the holy men of old. The Letter to the Hebrews begins, "On various occasions and in different ways God spoke in past ages to (our) fathers by the prophets; and finally at the present time He has spoken to us through His Son." This presence of God's Son on earth made possible the greatest and most perfect communication between God and man.

But how does God speak to us now? In a threefold manner: 1. in holy Scripture, God's own message; over the various books the Gospel takes precedence. 2. God speaks through His priests, "Whoever hears you, hears Me; and whoever hears Me, hears Him who sent Me." In the sermon it is God who speaks. 3. The words of the Church in the ministration of the sacraments are effective only through the name or power of God.

What does the parable say about the words of God? The parable calls God's message a grain of seed. Now a grain of seed is a very wonderful thing; it shows no traces of life, but it is not a stone. It is not a plant, it does not grow, it does not multiply, it seems as if it were dead. "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains alone." By itself a grain of seed is not alive. It is inert like a pebble; but it has within itself the power of life. When it is placed in warm, moist ground, then its dormant potentialities are released, it springs to life and becomes a plant with leaf and blossom and fruit.

Isn't this marvellous? And to such a seed Christ likens the words of God. In them are stored the dynamic potentialities of God's grace, they embody life, divine life. For many of us this is a new discovery. All of us knew that the words of Sacred Scripture are instructive and informative and stimulate acts of piety; we admit that the words of a sermon have power to the extent that they touch our hearts. And everyone would unhesitatingly grant that in the words by which a sacrament is conferred there is special efficacy. But now our parable shows clearly that the words of God also have the power of divine life, even as a seed.

Of course, God's words need suitable ground, viz., receptive hearts. If the heart is unreceptive, then God's seed will not sprout, it will perish. The words of God have no magic power; they need the cooperation of man. But if man cooperates, then His words produce sacramental results. They bring life, for they contain within themselves the spirit of God. This is our happy discovery: God's message is sacramental in character; it pulses with life, and produces life. Do not miss the parable's conclusion: Jesus speaks of fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. *Verbum Dei non est alligatum.*

MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The flood, a figure of judgment

1. The Sunday Theme. Again during this entire week the Church wants us to keep in mind the message of the Sunday

Gospel; for this reason each day at sundown the liturgy puts before us the Parable of the Sower, using at times texts taken from the homily of St. Gregory instead of from the Gospel (since this happens so rarely, it is a special distinction for our Doctor of the Church).

Today's antiphon: "If you are seeking the heights of real honor, hasten as fast as you can to (your) heavenly fatherland." The sinking sun beckons us to our heavenly fatherland. The antiphon is taken from the homily of St. Gregory which was read in yesterday's Office.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 7:1–23). We read about the beginning of the flood. With his family and many animals Noe enters the ark and then the dreadful flood begins; the waters cover the highest mountains and destroy all life upon earth. The great flood was a punishment from God for the sins of men. This is another lesson we should learn in the anteroom of Lent, along with that of the fall and the first murder.

3. Matins. On Septuagesima Sunday we resolved to devote special study to the Breviary Hours. Let us keep this resolution, remembering that the Divine Office consecrates the day, while its various sections sanctify the passing hours.

Matins. It is night. The confusion of the day is stilled; all about us is silence. The Church is praying; she remembers the nighttime prayers of her Bridegroom, she sees the nightly prayers of the first Christians in the catacombs. Times may have changed, but the Church insists: night was designed not merely for sleep, but for prayer too. In ancient times Matins were the Church's parousia prayer, her vigil as she awaited Christ's return. Night is a symbol of earthly life. We are like the virgins who awaited the Bridegroom, with the lamp of divine love in our hands. Listen to an exhortation on Matins given to the Christians in Rome about the year 200 A.D. (Hippolytus, "Apostolic Tradition," chap. 32, 19-27):

"At midnight arise from your bed, wash, and pray. Wash yourself with fresh water. If you have a wife, pray with her. If she is not yet a believer, withdraw from her and pray alone; then return to your place. Even if you are bound by the bond of marital duty, do not omit to pray for this has not defiled

you. . . . It is necessary for us to pray at that hour because the fathers have given us this custom, they have also taught us to wash this way.

"At that hour all of creation is at rest and praises God. Stars, trees, and water are, as it were, standing still; the whole host of the angels worships God with the souls of the just. Because all these praise almighty God at that hour, the faithful too give themselves to prayer. Thus spoke the Lord, He who witnesses it: 'At midnight a cry arose, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming, go forth to meet him!" ' And He added still another admonition, 'Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man shall come.' "

Nevertheless, we must say that at the present time Matins are farther dissociated from the time of day they represent than any other Hour of the Divine Office. There is practically no connection between the various nocturns and the passing hours of the night; without a noticeable detriment to devotion all of Matins can be said either on the day before or in the early morning. Themes peculiar to the Hour are generally displaced by seasonal themes derived from the Scripture readings or from other varying parts of the Breviary.

On feast days Matins dramatize the mystery; to understand a feast one must study carefully its night office. Not infrequently the Office of Matins is a masterpiece of the art of prayer, e.g., Matins of the last three days of Holy Week, Matins of the Office of the Dead, of the Dedication of a Church, of Corpus Christi. On ferial days the psalms of Matins are to a great extent a meditation on the kingdom of God, remote preparation for the great day of redemption.

Matins have a ringing beginning, the invitatory, and close with a magnificent finale, the Te Deum, on feast days, joyful Sundays, and in Paschaltide. The invitatory, with its psalm of monumental power (Ps. 94), is a liturgical masterpiece. But in order to experience fully the invitatory's incomparable emotional potential one must assist at the night office chanted in choir. On Christmas, for example, the *Christus natus est nobis*, Christ is born unto us, peals out crystal clear, like the joyous tidings

of a herald, a real Gospel in the stillness of night. It is indeed a splendid overture to the feast itself.

The Te Deum, the universal Church's song of praise to the triune God and to Jesus Christ, closes the Hour with a fervent plea for protection. It forms a beautiful transition to the following prayer Hour, Lauds.

TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The dove, a symbol of the Christian soul

1. The Sunday Theme. "The seed is the Word of God, the Sower is Christ; he who finds Him will abide forever." A beautiful passage from the lips of Mother Church!

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 8:1–13).

"Then God remembered Noe, and all the wild animals and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God sent a wind over the earth and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens were closed. The rain from the heavens was withheld. The waters steadily receded from the earth. They subsided at the end of one hundred and fifty days. And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. The waters continued to recede until the tenth month; on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains appeared."

3. Lauds. A jubilant Hour, fresh as the dew, perhaps the most beautiful of the whole day! First the symbolism of the

Hour. It is night. Man and nature are asleep. Slowly off in the east the sky becomes gray; shafts of light play against the vault of heaven; dawn is heralding a new day and awakening the world of nature.

This, however, is only a figure or symbol of an event in the history of salvation; for at this hour the Savior burst asunder the fetters of death and now He celebrates His resurrection. Moreover, these two mighty awakenings bring to mind a third, the spiritual resurrection of man.

We have, then, a triple resurrection: nature awakens, the Savior rises from the dead, and man renews his own spiritual resurrection. It is with this perspective that we pray Lauds. The Hour is distinctly a service of praise, praise is its dominating theme. If you allow these three concurrent and confluent levels of reality to fill your mind, if you place yourself in the midst of nature praising, praying, and rejoicing with her as she rises to new life, if you recite this hour early in the day and if possible out of doors, you will be thrilled — spiritually.

With clarity and force Lauds show how piety and devotion may be stimulated by the proper correlation of dogma and the time of day. The psalms of Lauds are carefully chosen songs of praise. In them nature motifs are constantly recurring, while the resurrection theme is inherent in the oft repeated Alleluia. This is noticeable particularly on Sunday, the day of resurrection *par excellence*. On Sunday the day and the hour of Christ's resurrection coincide; and this is true on Easter Sunday in an eminent way.

Lauds reach a climax in the Gospel canticle which is a song of gratitude for redemption accomplished as well as a song of greeting to the day of redemption just dawning, a day which should aid us in taking further steps toward realizing redemption more fully within us. At this point the Church plays the role of a worshiper as she puts herself in the place of Zachary. Every day she celebrates the advent of her Redeemer and salutes her Savior, as the *Oriens ex alto*, "The Orient from on high."

Lauds on Sundays and on feasts are classical in beauty. First,

as nature awakens, the divine King is seated upon the firmament of the heavens, Victor over the floods (Ps. 92); then the procession of mankind to the Holy of Holies (Ps. 99); next the bride's morning kiss to her divine Spouse (*adhaesit anima mea post te, me suscepit dextera tua*, Ps. 62); and finally, all creation in one grand symphony of praise in the *Benedicite* and *Laudate*.

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

The ark, a figure of the Church

1. The Sunday Theme. The Magnificat antiphon, "But that which fell upon good ground, these are they who with a right and good heart bear fruit in patience." The liturgy has its "method of meditation"; each day during the week a point from the Sunday mystery is unravelled for our further consideration.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 8:13–9:17). Noe leaves the ark. "Noe removed the covering of the ark and saw that the surface of the ground had dried. Then God said to Noe, 'Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing you have of all flesh: birds, cattle, and every creature crawling on the earth, that they may abound on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.' Noe went forth with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All wild animals, all cattle, all birds and all creatures crawling on the earth: according to their kinds they went out of the ark.

"Then Noe built an altar to the Lord; he took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered holocausts upon the altar. When the Lord smelled the sweet odor He said to Him-

The design. The dove is a symbol of the soul, the olive branch in its beak represents the graces of redemption (peace).

self, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth; I will never destroy every living creature, as I have done. As long as the earth shall last, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'

"Then God said to Noe and to his sons with him, 'I will establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you.' And God said, 'This is the token of the covenant; I set it between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all generations to come. I will set My bow in the clouds and it shall be a token of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh.' "

What observation does the Church make as she reflects upon the deluge and the ark? In the deluge she sees a) an instrument of divine justice punishing the corrupt children of the world; b) a symbol of baptism. Sin is washed away both by the waters of the deluge and by the waters of baptism. God once sent the just man Noe to save fallen mankind; to us He sends Christ, the Savior. Our Savior also built an ark, the Catholic Church, and all who refuse to enter through baptism perish eternally. The ark of Noe offered refuge to a single family; the ark of Jesus saves the whole great family of Christendom and carries it to the mountain of heaven.

The dove with a green olive branch is a symbol of the baptized Christian. Yes, we all bear an olive branch, the grace of baptism, the inextinguishable mark of the sacrament we have received; and by our anointing with chrism (a mixture of balsam and olive oil) we have become other "Christs." The rainbow, the sign of peace and the covenant, is a figure of the Redeemer, who again joined heaven and earth together.

3. Prime. Prime, the Church's second morning prayer, differs greatly from Lauds. Lauds are impersonal, objective, the ideal morning prayer of creation and of the Church universal. Prime is the morning prayer of sinful man, a highly personal prayer. It seeks to dispose one properly for the coming day's conflict. This single aim permeates the entire Hour.

In its basic structure I can find no association with the story of salvation. The Hour theme, viz., preparation for the day at

hand, is so dominating as to withstand the introduction of other truths, even on feast days. The hymn dedicates the worshiper's every sense and faculty to God and equips him for any eventuality, thus very beautifully voicing the Hour's basic thought.

As an appendix to Prime we find a rather long invariable section, which gives the Hour its special character as a fitting morning prayer. After the psalms comes the conclusion common to all the little Hours (Prime through None), i.e., chapter, responsory, versicle, and oration. The chapter, "To the eternal King . . . ," is our oath of allegiance; the alternate chapter, "Love peace and truth . . . ," is our program for the coming day. Conscious of his helplessness the blind man of Jericho sat by the road as Jesus passed, calling out for mercy as loudly as he could — I am that blind beggar, and today my Savior is passing by (Resp.). The beautiful oration never varies; it contains all the elements of a good morning prayer, e.g., gratitude, petition, the proper mental attitude to face problems; note, in particular, the very practical plea for grace "not to commit sin this day!"

With this prayer the first part of Prime, the so-called "Choir Office," came to an end and the monks went to the chapter room for their daily "chapter." Ordinarily this embraced four points, which are still implied in the portion of Prime that follows. 1. Reading of the Martyrology, the Church's official list of the saints. It is certainly excellent pedagogical method to put the coming day's heroes before our eyes as shining patterns just when the daily conflict is about to begin! 2. Division and distribution of work. The abbot would assign the monks to their daily tasks. The following prayers and verses have reference to this medieval practice and seek to inculcate a proper spirit. 3. Reading of a section from the Rule or from the Bible. 4. The abbot's blessing. Twice each day a special blessing is imparted during the Office: at Prime, for the day's beginning, and at Compline, to close the day.

Prime likewise serves as the Hour prayer for the period from six o'clock to nine o'clock. Notice too the very appropriate in-

vocation before the chapter, one which gives clear and concise expression to Prime's underlying theme, "May the Lord almighty order our days and actions. . . ."

THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

Sem, ancestor to the Redeemer

1. Scripture Reading (Gen. 9:18–29). Holy Scripture relates yet another seemingly unimportant episode, one, however, which profoundly influenced the course of the story of salvation. The incident throws light upon the roles which Noe's three sons were to take in the history of redemption. (Holy Scripture is always concerned with the supernatural.)

"The sons of Noe who went out of the ark were Sem, Ham, and Japheth. These three were the sons of Noe and from these the whole earth was peopled. Now Noe was a husbandman, the first to plant a vineyard. When he drank of the wine, he became drunk and lay naked in his tent. Ham saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Sem and Japheth took a robe, and laying it upon their shoulders, went backward and covered their father's nakedness; as their faces were turned away, they did not see their father's nakedness."

The disrespect of Ham, the youngest son, toward his drunken father who had not known the effect of wine, was a sign of his ignoble spirit. Illumined by the spirit of God, the aged patriarch prophesied the destinies of his sons and their descendants. "When Noe awoke from his drunkenness and learned what his youngest son had done to him, he said:

'Cursed be Chanaan;
meanest of slaves shall he be
to his brethren.'

Then he said:

'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Sem;
let Chanaan be his slave.
May God expand Japheth;
let him dwell in the tents of Sem;
let Chanaan be his slave.' "

2. Terce. Nine o'clock. The Church wishes us to lift our hearts to God at various moments in the midst of our daily

work — that is the purpose of the little Hours; they are breathing spaces for the soul, oases in our wanderings through the desert. These Hours should never be said in one session, they should be prayed at the time each represents to sanctify its portion of the day. The little Hours are short, leaving plenty of time for labor.

An event from Biblical history comes into prominence at Terce. At the third hour (nine o'clock) the Holy Ghost descended upon the new community of Christians. On Pentecost, therefore, the hymn *Veni Creator* is said. This mystery of the Spirit's operation in the Church is the main characteristic of Terce; it is the Hour of confirmation, of strengthening for the day's conflict, a *Veni Sancte Spiritus* upon the work at hand.

The hymns at the four little Hours develop the Hour theme. The Terce hymn contains two profound and thought provoking ideas, a) our body is the dwelling or temple of the Holy Ghost; all the faculties of body and soul should proclaim the glory of this temple of God; b) love, both for God and for one's neighbor, is the Spirit's special gift. The texts proper to Terce also reflect the Hour's specific character, e.g., the Sunday chapter, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

Preparation for Lent

1. Scripture Reading (Gen. 10:1–11:9). Holy Scripture presents the celebrated "Table of Nations," i.e., the enumeration of seventy-two peoples descended from Noe's three sons. This list is the "oldest, the most valuable and most complete document concerning the division of peoples upon the earth from remote antiquity." Despite their education and advanced culture the Greeks and Romans never dreamt that they were more closely related to the German races than to the Semites; but this had long been clearly stated in the Biblical Table of Nations, and comparative philology attests its truth today.

The Table of Nations teaches a most important lesson: mankind is one large family, children of the same father; the national divisions which God created and approved must not be unduly stressed.

Next we read about the tower of Babel: "The whole earth used the same language and the same speech. While men were migrating eastward, they discovered a valley in the land of Senaar and settled there. They said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake them.' They used bricks for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves lest we be scattered all over the earth.'

"The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which men had built. And the Lord said, 'Truly, they are one people and they all have the same language. This is the beginning of what they will do. Hereafter they will not be restrained from anything which they determine to do. Let us go down, and there confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech.'

"So the Lord scattered them from that place all over the earth; and they stopped building the city. For this reason it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the speech of all the earth. From there the Lord scattered them all over the earth."

Here there appears an attitude of mind hostile to God, this time in the midst of the children of Sem. They had been favored with God's blessing in a special way after Noe's prophecy but now showed themselves unworthy. The high points in the story are the following: men wished to establish a great earthly kingdom, with a magnificent capital at its center. The symbol of this kingdom hostile to God and ruled by pride was a tower of immense height. God defeated their plans by allowing the various groups to become involved in conflict with each other; they separated from one another, and because of their resultant cleavage various languages came into existence in the course of time.

The moral contained in the tower of Babel account is very appropriate to the period of Pre-Lent, being similar to the lessons in the story of the fall, the first murder, and the flood.

A counterpart to the confusion of tongues may be seen in the miracle of the gift of tongues on the first Pentecost. Sin is the source of confusion and multiplicity, Christ brings unity and order.

2. **Sext** is the Church's noonday prayer. The battle of the day is at its height. The heat of passion is strongest, hell is exercising its greatest power as man's lower nature strives to gain the upper hand. Historically the Hour is related to the events on Calvary — the Savior is hanging on the Cross (twelve to three o'clock); even against Him hell looses all its power. For a background, then, we have the scene on Good Friday, while we personally take part in the mighty struggle against sin going on all around us. "Lead us not into temptation" would serve well as a superscription to the Hour.

Let us look again at the hymn; see how it extracts spiritual significance from the time of day it represents. By way of introduction the first verse ascribes to God morning's radiant light and noon's burning heat. This noonday heat is a symbol of two evils and of two divinely willed blessings in human life. The evils are: a) the heat of dissension or hatred, "Extinguish every flame of strife." b) The heat of passion or lust. The same noonday sun is also a figure of two blessings: a) health of body, "Grant our bodies health"; warmth is a prerequisite for health and life. b) Peace. The peaceful quiet of noon gives us occasion to beg, "Shed forth Thy peace upon the soul."

SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA

Abraham, the father of our faith

1. **Scripture Reading** (Gen. 11:10–30). In a few short sentences the sacred record now leads us through the genealogy from Sem to Thare, Abraham's father — the Messianic line in ten generations. The literary form resembles that which recorded the genealogy from Adam to Noe, except that only two figures are given, i.e., the age of each patriarch when his oldest son was born and how long he lived thereafter. Observe how the life span decreases: 600, 500, 400, to 200 years.

When even this privileged race fell victim to the evils of idolatry, God decided to set apart a sacred remnant, a family to preserve and cherish the Messianic hope, the family of Abraham. In order to safeguard them from the contagion of a pagan environment, God sent them away from their native country, Ur in lower Mesopotamia, to the land of Chanaan, the future "Promised Land."

"These are the descendants of Sem. When Sem was one hundred years old he became the father of Arphachsad, two years after the flood. Sem lived five hundred years after the birth of Arphachsad, and had other sons and daughters. . . .

"Thare was the father of Abram, Nahor and Aran. Aran became the father of Lot. Aran died before his father Thare in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees. Abram and Nahor married. Abram's wife was Sarai. Now Sarai was barren; she had no children. Thare took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Aran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and led them from Ur of the Chaldees toward the land of Chanaan; but when they reached Haran, they settled there."

With the patriarchs from Sem to Abraham the story of salvation comes into historical perspective; they are witnesses to the fact that God had been faithful to His promise despite man's infidelity.

2. **None** sanctifies the time between three and six o'clock. The day of redemption is slowly drawing to a close while our mind becomes occupied with thoughts on the end of life. Looking into the future the question comes easily, "Shall I be able to persevere?" Final perseverance is accordingly the theme of the last little Hour. I can find no point of contact between None and sacred history.

In beautiful poetry the hymn emphasizes the symbolism of the Hour; the change from day to night reflects the change from life to death, while all change stands in utter contrast to our changeless God. Night is a common figure for affliction, temptation, inconstancy; now the soul flees more swiftly to the light that is Christ. The declining day is then a reminder of life's decline, and death. May it be a holy departure in re-

ward for a life pleasing to God. Surely the hymn is full of profound thoughts, inviting a lengthier meditation.

3. The Eve of Sunday. As a triptych the Saturdays of Pre-Lent summarize the main thoughts of the Old Testament readings. Today's antiphon, the splendid *Pater fidei nostrae* of the Magnificat, brings to a climax the antiphons of these three Saturdays: "The father of our faith, Abraham the Great, offered a holocaust upon the altar in place of his son." This the Church has not borrowed from holy Scripture, it is her own composition. They are sacred and solemn words, and in the melody to which they are sung the Church has found a lovely medium to express her feelings. In the chapter St. Paul begins his wonderful song of love that we will hear in its entirety as the Epistle of tomorrow's Mass.

THE WEEK OF QUINQUAGESIMA

On this third Sunday in the series, Pre-Lent comes to its zenith. There is more intensity than on previous Sundays, as may be noticed in the choice of the patriarch, in the selection of the station church, and in the liturgical texts taken as a whole. Today is the Church's third and final call inviting all to profit by the Lenten season of grace.

Again this Sunday three men appear and speak to us: Abraham, the Rock of the Old Testament, the hero of obedience through faith; on the summit of Moria (where Christ died), he offered the great sacrifice of his own child. Peter, the Rock of the New Testament; today at his grave we offer the sacrifice of holy Mass; with words taken from the life of his brother Paul he teaches us the ultimate goal of all our efforts during Lent, love. Finally, Christ rises up before us; He will help us "that we may see" by healing us of our spiritual blindness.

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem" to suffer; now the Church has raised the curtain, and in the distance we can see Holy Week and Easter. This very week Lent begins; its venerable portal is Ash Wednesday.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Station at St. Peter

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem

1. Today holy Church presents to us a drama in three acts: Act I. An Old Testament passion play. Abraham, the man of obedience through faith, enters. The spirit and principle of his every act was total surrender to the will of God. When still a young man, God took him from his home and led him to a foreign land. Homeless, he put all his confidence in God. Relying upon divine promises Abraham hoped against hope for a son until his hundredth year. Then Sara gave birth to Isaac. The child grew up, a joy to his parents; the boy became a young man. One night God stood before Abraham — he must sacrifice his son with his own hand!

Abraham obeys. On the mountain where sacrificial lambs, types of the true Lamb, were immolated at a later date, where Christ Himself died, there on Mt. Moria we see the aged patriarch standing as a priest before an altar upon which Isaac lies bound. Abraham is ready to immolate the victim, but the real sacrifice he is offering is that of obedience and purity of will. We know how God responded, how He gave back to Abraham his son, alive; and in Isaac his son God gave Abraham His own Son as He made him the ancestor of the Messiah.

In the coming season of penance you can bring God no sacrifice that is more acceptable than that of you own *will*. Lent, in the last analysis, should align our wills perfectly with that of God.

Act II. At Peter's grave. The Church conducts us to the grave of St. Peter in Rome where Christians from every quarter are gathered for a common service. First, a few scenes from Peter's life. It is Holy Thursday. Peter is standing in the courtyard of Caiphas, the high priest; he wishes to see what will happen to Jesus. But he is recognized by a maidservant. He swears and curses, insisting that he has never seen the Gal-

ilean. Then the glance of his fettered Master falls upon him, the cock crows; he goes out and weeps bitterly!

Another scene. Some time has elapsed since the Savior's resurrection. The place is by the Lake Genesareth. Jesus stands before Peter and asks him three times, "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter answers, "You know that I love You. You know all things, You know that I love You."

Now Peter turns and says to us: See in me an example of Christ's great love, His love for a sinful creature. And from the lips of my brother Paul listen to a wonderful canticle on love!

Act III. The blind see. Our Lord is making His last trip to Jerusalem. Near the gates of Jericho He gives His apostles the third prophecy of His passion. Then He enters the city of palms and stays with the publican Zacheus. As He leaves, a blind beggar kneels on the roadside; he cries

Quinquagesima's principal themes are illustrated in the drawing. Below we see Abraham and Isaac. Their sacrifice consisted in immolating their wills — God did not permit the performance of the act itself. Love of God burned brightly within both father and son; both, therefore, are surrounded by flames and incense. In the middle vignette Christ is passing through Jericho, the city of palms, on His way to lay down His life as a sacrifice for many in Jerusalem. Love again is the impelling motive. This blind man whom Jesus meets represents those without the light of faith; loudly and earnestly he calls: Son of David, have mercy on me. A virgin having seraph wings and crowned with roses typifies charity where faith and hope are no more. She accompanies her song on a harp. Charity is greater than faith (cross) and hope (anchor). Here on earth love frequently involves sacrifice that sears and burns (bottom) or a road to Calvary (center), but in heaven love encounters nothing but eternal peace and joy.

aloud with all his might for the light of Easter. Jesus heals him, and with seeing eyes he joins the procession to Jerusalem.

You, my Christian friend, are that blind beggar. At Easter time Christ heals your eyes.

During the holy Sacrifice we take part in playing these three acts. Like Abraham we give our most precious possession, our very self, and in exchange receive what is even more precious, Christ. Like Peter we grieve over our infidelity and receive the proof of highest love in the death on the Cross renewed. With eyes healed we already see the purpose of the bloody drama of the Cross, for it has brought us spiritual enlightenment.

2. Holy Mass (Esto mihi). Our preparation for the great season of spiritual renewal comes to a climax in today's Mass liturgy celebrated at the grave of the apostle Peter. Seeking help we come to the house of God, to the Rock of Peter; but our mood is less despondent and more confident than on the previous two Sundays: "Be my leader and my nourisher" (*Intr.*) today and through the forty day "sojourn in the desert" of Lent. Psalm 30 leads us through the depths of the passion to the heights of the transfiguration on Tabor (Easter).

The *Collect* repeats the last of the requests in the Our Father: lead us not into temptation, deliver us from all evil. *Epistle*: the third Epistle of Pre-Lent takes us to the summit of preparation for Lent, love. Paul sings his magnificent canticle of love; nothing in God's kingdom is nobler than this self-effacing, all-patient love which never passes away. *Gradual*: the song of love is followed by a chant in thanksgiving for redemption. In the *Gospel* the Church shows us the Savior upon the road to Calvary and in the glory of His resurrection. Holy Week and Easter come before our astonished eyes; now, during the Sacrifice, I am like the blind beggar who sat beside the road and Christ wishes to open my eyes as He passes.

In the *Offertory* "I follow Him, glorifying God" upon the road of suffering. May this offering, we ask in the *Secret*, wipe out sins and sanctify our body and soul, so that we may offer the holy Sacrifice worthily. In the *Communion* anthem the

Church assures us that the Eucharist will quiet all our longing and desire for Easter happiness. In the *Postcommunion* we again ask for protection against all types of misfortunes.

3. Divine Office. A pleasing symmetry is immediately noticeable in today's liturgical Offices. The blind man at the roadside (Gospel) and the hero of our faith, Abraham, (Matins) are with us as models throughout all the Hours of the day. Furthermore, at each day Hour the apostle of the Gentiles instructs us with his wonderful song of love.

"Abraham was truly a great man. He was distinguished by virtues so numerous and excellent as not to be attainable by mere worldly wisdom" (St. Ambrose, at Matins). Today the Church tells us about the patriarch's departure from his unbelieving friends and relatives and his journey to the "Promised Land." The Lord said to Abraham:

"Leave your country, your kinsfolk
and your father's house,
for the land that I will show you;
I will make a great nation for you.
I will bless you and make your name great,
so that you shall be a blessing.
I will bless them that bless you,
and curse them that curse you,
In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

These words, a Messianic prophecy, have been fulfilled in Christ.

"Abram went away as the Lord had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, all the property they had acquired and the persons they had got in Haran; and they departed for the land of Chanaan. At that time the Chanaanite was in the land.

"The Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' So Abram built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him."

While the night service devotes more time to the Old Testament (eight responsories refer to Abraham!) the day Hours, with proper antiphons rich in meaning and artistically constructed, reflect almost exclusively the spirit of the New Testament. "The blind man is the human race. Cast forth in the

person of Adam from the peace of paradise, men no longer know the brilliance of heaven's light; they suffer from blindness, a consequence of their exile" (St. Gregory).

Again the Church shows us how to dramatize the Gospel throughout the day. At sunrise we hear from the lips of Jesus, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalm, and all things that have been written concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. He will be given over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death, but on the third day He will rise again." A most appropriate chant for the sunrise Hour! At the four stations of the day (little Hours) we are the blind man seeking "Light" from the Lord, and we do so more urgently and more fervently at each succeeding station.

In the evening at sunset the drama comes to a glorious finale as the Lord gives me (the blind man) the power to see. "Immediately he could see; and he followed Him, praising (*magnificans*) God." In gratitude we sing the Magnificat, today it is the thanksgiving song of the healed blind man. See how the two great divisions of the day complement each other! For proper to nighttime is the figure of Abraham, a type of our work of fasting and of the suffering Christ; proper to daytime is the reality of fulfillment, i.e., Christ goes to His passion and we ask for the light of resurrection and receive it in advance.

4. The Catechumens. A Meditation. We shall arrive at a better understanding of the three Sundays of Pre-Lent if we study them from the viewpoint of the catechumenate in the ancient Church. Then we will more easily see how these three Sundays are of one mold, beautifully and symmetrically constructed, like a triptych above an altar.

The three Gospels show the development of a catechumen (i.e., a candidate for baptism) as he takes three ascending steps, viz., a) he responds to a call; b) he is instructed; c) he is enlightened. First comes God's call. There in the market square of the world many idle heathens may be standing, the divine Father passes by and invites certain ones into the vineyard of the Church! Why not others? That is the secret of divine vocation. We do not know how it happened that this particular

man was called. Apparently it was chance, perhaps he had a Christian office girl or saw a devout Christian's example. But in every case it was God who called. God invites individuals without merit of their own, often simply *because* they are unworthy. He selects one from out of a thousand; and calls him.

You, who read these lines, are among the number called. Why do you stand idle in the market place of the world? Why do you delay entering God's vineyard?

Vocation is first, but further steps are necessary. After selecting a number of individuals God begins training them. In ancient times this was the catechumenate; and the work for and by the candidate for baptism was taken most seriously. An ecclesiastical ruling of St. Hippolytus (about 216) prescribed three years of instruction. This training did not consist in memorizing abstract truths but in the practice of living a Christ-like life. We are all catechumens for many years, perhaps until we are thirty. By this time the essentials of Christian virtue should have been molded in us; but that does not imply that we need no further instruction. The school of God continues until death.

Now, to use terms from the Parable of the Sower, we must be receptive ground in order that the divine seed may not go lost or prove ineffective. Fellow Christians, let us use the graces offered us so profusely by God! I believe that as alert Christians, as Christians who try to live with the Church, we have received extraordinary graces. The whole treasury of liturgical life is at our disposal. With the psalmist we can say, "My lines are fallen in pleasant places; my inheritance is goodly to me!" (Ps. 15).

When the candidates for baptism had finished their term at school (Lent), the great day of initiation came. They were allowed to enter the "heaven" on earth, the "promised land flowing with milk and honey." This constituted their "illumination," the third and highest stage. Between this and the two previous stages there is no adequate equation. The call and the training are impulses which are due to God; but spiritual illumination brings into being a new creation.

Spiritual enlightenment, however, is not restricted to candi-

dates for baptism. It is a process which continues throughout one's whole life and reaches its consummation only when "eternal light shines" in the brightness of heaven. Repeatedly the Church bids us in the words of an ancient hymn: "Rise, you who are sleeping! Arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." For us too Lent must be a catechumenate, that Christ may again enlighten us. Easter Eve with its pillar of fire must be the dawn of a new day of light in our minds and hearts.

Do you now see the lovely composition underlying these three Pre-Lenten Sundays? Vocation—Instruction—Enlightenment? But this does not exhaust the Mass liturgy. The three Epistles challenge us to a program of conflict, of work, and of love. Another triptych. "This is what the Christian life means," the Church says to her catchumens; "it is a battle, a race, a wrestling-match for the wreath of victory. A hard fight! And you must be victorious!" Christian life is no fool's paradise; it is a hard task, filled with suffering and effort, struggle and temptation.

For inspiration the Church could present no finer picture than St. Paul's self-portrait. Again the climax comes on the third Sunday, for to struggle and to work is important in Christian life, yet the way of charity is far more exalted, far more sublime. Conflict, suffering, work become like "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" when love is lacking. With love we have the perfect triad.

And lastly, at the portal to Lent the Church places those three inspiring statues, Adam's, Noe's, Abraham's. Adam, the father of mankind! From him all of us have received flesh and blood, and also the inheritance of original sin. Noe, the just man! Amid general godlessness he built the ark at God's behest. And Abraham, the father of all the faithful, the man of obedience through faith! All three are types of future more perfect realities. Adam is a figure of Christ, the father of redeemed man. The ark represents the Church, which saves us from perishing in the judgment. And Abraham's sacrifice pointed to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. How wise, how inspiring is Mother Church in her holy liturgy!

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA

Son of David, have mercy on me

1. The Sunday Theme. At sundown we repeat a passage from the Gospel, "They who went in front angrily tried to silence him. But he kept crying out all the louder, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' " With longing such as this we should petition the light of Easter! The Church is endeavoring to develop in us the spirit to begin Lent, the season of penance, as blind beggars.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 18). Today's lesson describes one of the most interesting theophanies in the Old Testament. Accompanied by two angels, Yahweh comes to Abraham and promises Sara a son, "Now the Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. And when he raised his eyes he saw three men standing at a distance from him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent door to meet them, and bowed down to the earth, and said, 'My Lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought that you may wash your feet; and then rest yourselves under the tree. Since you have come to your servant, I will bring you a little food that you may refresh yourselves; then you may go on.' They replied, 'Do as you have said.'

"Then Abraham hastened into the tent to Sara and said, 'Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it, and make loaves.' And he ran to the herd, picked out a good, tender bullock, and gave it to the servant who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the bullock which had been prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, 'Where is Sara your wife?' He answered, 'She is in the tent.' 'I will surely return to you at this time next year,' he said, 'and Sara your wife shall have a son.' Sara was listening inside the entrance of the tent. Now Abraham and Sara were old, advanced in years."

3. Vespers, the Church's evening prayer, bear a remarkable similarity to Lauds in both structure and in general content. The Church looks back upon the day of redemption just

past, with all its redemptive graces, and gives fervent thanks. Vespers are a prayer of gratitude; the climax comes in the "Magnificat," the finest thanksgiving prayer in the liturgy. The "thought of the hour" is gratitude for the day of redemption that is now over, thanksgiving for every saving grace which came to individual souls and to the Church as a whole.

To pray Vespers with the Last Supper in mind is an easy and natural association. It was about Vesper time when Christ and His apostles had their final meal together. Immediately we begin thinking of the holy Eucharist; and, indeed, a large number of Vesper psalms are Eucharistic or can easily be understood in a Eucharistic manner. The so-called Hallel Psalms (112-117) were recited at the Last Supper; the Gradual Psalms (119-131) were sung on pilgrimage to the Pasch. The Last Supper itself is a symbol of the heavenly banquet.

Vespers labor under a disadvantage which Lauds do not have; the psalms of Lauds were selected specifically for the Hour, whereas the Vesper psalms come in numerical order and include compositions with foreign themes.

4. Preparation for Lent. For our religious life Lent is a season of tremendous significance; it is the Church's forty day retreat, the time *par excellence* for spiritual reform and interior renewal. As baptized penitents we enter the arena with Christ in order to share in His resurrection at Easter. The Lenten liturgy is as luxuriant as spring itself; no other season of the entire year is so rich in liturgical texts. We who wish to make the liturgy our guide to piety, will devote ourselves during Lent to the task of intensifying our religious life in accordance with the spirit of Mother Church.

a) The purpose of Pre-Lent is to condition ourselves for the proper observance of Lent, since every good work needs due preparation. During the few days left before Ash Wednesday we should arrive at a definite answer to the serious question, "How am I going to keep Lent this year?" A liturgical parish will also take counsel with its leader on the problem, "What can we as a body do this Lent?" Perhaps a word of caution is needed here: do not undertake too much lest you find it im-

possible to continue after a brief but over-zealous beginning. No one cares to be like the man in the Gospel who began to build a tower and then could not finish it, thus incurring the scorn of his neighbors. Therefore, not too much; but some specific resolutions whereby this Lent will be different from previous years are necessary.

If we visited a religious community on Ash Wednesday we would immediately sense a new and utterly different spirit; a holy gravity envelops all the members; oral and written communication with the world outside is restricted; holy silence, greater reflection, more frequent use of penances, an intensified prayer life—all this indicates their conviction that "a time for the spirit" has come. Communities exemplifying these liturgical ideals should be our inspiration.

Now for some personal resolutions. What shall I do about fasting? Do not underestimate the value of this holy discipline; the liturgy speaks of it in terms of the highest respect; remember the Lenten preface, "Through bodily fasting You curb our vices, You elevate our minds, You give strength and merit." Each one should determine exactly how much and what he will eat at breakfast and supper; whether he can give up afternoon coffee; how often during the week he will abstain from desserts, and so on.

Fasting in the wider sense—abstinence from our favorite action—should likewise be on the agenda. One individual will give up smoking, another candy, another beer and liquor, another his siesta, another will limit his social calls and parties. Of course, everyone will forego such pleasures as movies and the theater during the holy season.

The hymn at Matins urges a number of the traditional Lenten practices: "Let us be more sparing in speech, food, drink, sleep, and amusement; let us be more zealous in keeping watch." In almost every Lenten Collect there is reference to physical fasting (often in such strong words as *castigare, macerare*); how ashamed must they be who actually make no effort in this matter!

Closely related to fasting is almsgiving. Our alms for Christ's

poor brethren we lay upon the altar at the Offertory of the Mass. And what of our prayer life? Certainly we will devote more time to the Church's official prayer book, the Breviary; perhaps it would be good to say certain Hours at very definite times and with special fervor, e.g., Lauds and Prime, Vespers and Compline.

b) The Lenten Mass. Our best efforts should be directed to the worthy celebration of the Lenten Masses. The ideal would be daily Mass actually held as a community service. The ancient Church remains our model; then the clergy and people offered the Eucharistic liturgy of Lent with their bishop every day. This service had as its object the preparation of the catechumens for Easter, the conversion of penitents, and the spiritual renewal of the faithful. As friends of the liturgy we are convinced that the Mass is the very center of religious life, that it is the fount from which all graces flow, that it is the food and medicine of God's life within us. Consequently no other single item will receive as much time and attention as the daily Lenten Mass.

At this point I would suggest that it be the dialog Mass with a brief sermon. Is that impossible? I know some places where this actually takes place. I am thinking, for instance, of the stational Masses celebrated by Cardinal La Fontaine in the city of Naples. What is done by the bishop in a metropolis can be done by the priest in a parish. When the church is large and has several altars, a sort of stational celebration at individual altars could be arranged. Of course, the principal objective is the spiritual renewal of the congregation through daily Mass and sermon.

It may not be the good fortune of many readers to offer holy Mass in community with their neighbors; in spirit these will join the universal community of Christendom. Every friend of the liturgy will assist at Mass daily throughout the season, he will study the formulary beforehand, and apply its dogmas and precepts during the day. Never will he waver a moment in his conviction that the Mass is the principal source for real spiritual renewal.

TUESDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA

The last day before Lent

In most religious communities Mardi Gras does not pass without a measure of harmless gaity. Even this is not without liturgical significance, because the gravity of Ash Wednesday is thereby placed in sharper relief.

1. The Sunday Theme. As the sun is sinking we again exclaim fervently with the blind man: " 'Have mercy on me, Son of David.' 'What do you want Me to do for you?' 'Lord, that I may see!' " This is the principal objective of the entire Easter cycle, spiritual illumination.

2. Scripture Reading (Gen. 22:1f). The touching story of a father sacrificing his son! Here Abraham is a type of Christ, who by sacrificial obedience redeemed the world. For this reason we daily commemorate the patriarch's action in the Canon of the Mass: "With a pleased and kindly face look upon our offerings and accept them, as You once accepted . . . the sacrifice of our father Abraham." On the top of Mt. Moria the patriarch stands in all his greatness.

When Isaac had come of age, God tested his father to see whether his faith was strong, unshakable. In the night He said to him, "Abraham, take your only son Isaac whom you love and go into the district of Moria, and there offer him as a holocaust on the hill which I shall point out to you." Very early in the morning Abraham arose, split wood for the burnt-offering,

loaded it upon an ass, took two servants and his son Isaac, and set out. He obeyed at once, although the sacrifice required of him must have weighed heavily upon his fatherly heart. Furthermore, the Messianic promise that he was to be the ancestor of the Redeemer seemed voided forever.

On the third day Abraham saw the place of sacrifice from a distance and said to the servants, "Stay here with the ass; I shall go on with the boy." The wood he put on Isaac's shoulder while the fire and the knife of immolation he chose to carry himself. On the way Isaac said, "Father, here is wood and fire, but where is the victim?" At the question his heart sank within him, but with real greatness of soul he answered, "God will provide." And they walked up the mountain together. On its summit Abraham erected an altar, put the wood upon it, bound Isaac and placed him on the pile. He was raising his hand for the final stroke when the Lord called, "Stop, Abraham, do not lay a hand on the boy; do nothing to him. I know now that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from Me."

Like Isaac who carried the wood for the sacrifice, so Christ carried His Cross to the mountain for immolation. But the heavenly Father did not spare His only-begotten Son.

3. Compline. Compline is the Church's second evening prayer. Unlike Vespers it is a subjective prayer, uttered by sinful souls preparing to return and rest peacefully in God. The hour begins directly, without an introductory prayer, and then lingers in examination of conscience and repentance.

Both in holy Scripture and in the liturgy light, the sun, and sunshine are frequently used as symbols for God, for Christ, and for divine life. Christ is the divine sun, the Christian is a "sun-child." The absence of light, night and darkness, with equal frequency symbolizes the sinister powers of hell. A fear of night and its implications pervades the entire Hour of Compline. In darkness the worshiper senses Satan's natural habitat, while the veil of night seems to serve well as a cloak for the prince of this world. Being a creature of light the child of God is afraid of darkness, and would flee from it as a chick runs to the wings of the mother hen at the advent of a hawk.

In liturgical prayer we think not only of ourselves but also of our fellow men. To them also evening has come, the evening of temptation, of sin, of death. For when night falls, it is as if hell depopulates itself and sends its inmates over the face of the earth to lure men to destruction. How many sins night tries to hide! The priest, therefore, prays this Hour to obtain protection for himself and for his fellow men.

Night is the time for sleep, and in sleep we have another symbol, one for death. Almost spontaneously the thought of death comes to mind when preparing to rest. Thus Compline takes on the nature of "life's night prayer," the official prayer for a happy death. Compline's double significance is expressed very succinctly in the brief blessing at the beginning, "May the Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end." Thirdly, the hour may be related to the story of our redemption if we recite it feeling ourselves near to Jesus during His death agony in the garden of Gethsemane; included in our intentions are the "Olivet hours" in our lives and in the lives of our fellow men. Compline, accordingly, is a serious prayer of remorse for sin, of petition for protection, and of deep confidence in God abidingly present.

Of special beauty is the section after the psalms. First an appropriate hymn and then a very touching chapter, "Lord, You are in our very midst." Jesus is here present; we are gathered together in His name. "Do not abandon us!" This topical thought is soon repeated in the versicle and response.

Two death scenes are now flashed before us, the first in the responsory. Hanging on the Cross Jesus speaks His last words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit!" Repeat these words slowly, pondering upon their profound meaning. To You, O Redeemer, I entrust my soul now in the night of time and of life and of the spirit! The versicle and response sketch two charming pictures, a) keep me as the apple of Your eye! Indeed I need to be protected as an eye, but I should also like to be as dear to You and as highly prized. b) We flee to the shelter of Your wings!

The second picture of death occurs in the Gospel canticle. The aged Simeon is holding the Child Jesus in his arms, his lifelong wish has been fulfilled, he has seen the Messiah, and now he begs for a peaceful death. The person who is praying is in a similar situation. Mystically he bears the Messiah in his arms and in his heart, the result of the day's redemptive graces. His eyes have again "seen salvation"; divine "light" shone upon him; Christ was his "glory." Now he too begs dismissal from service, for the day's work is over, perhaps even that of life. We are workers, and must be ready to be "dismissed" at any moment. These two pictures of death should leave a very deep impression.

The thought-provoking antiphon to Simeon's song blends together the physical and spiritual aspects of day and night, "Save us, Lord, when we are awake (by day); protect us when we are asleep (by night), that we may wake with Christ (through grace while on earth) and rest in peace (with a happy death)." Here again there is evidence that Compline is both a night prayer and a prayer for a blessed death.

The Collect, a short and meaty petition, summarizes the more important prayer topics of the Hour. 1. God is invited to dwell with us through the presence of His grace and by the power of His protection. As once the God of the Covenant dwelt among His people in the desert, so may He visit and abide with us! 2. God is the soul's protector, He must deny entrance to the enemy. 3. Yes, the blessed angels too are to live in this house. Quite easily we remember the patriarch Jacob's dream of the ladder extending to heaven with angels on it ascending and descending; heavenwards they carry our prayers and good works, and earthwards they bring grace and answered petitions. 4. May our heavenly Father's blessing be upon us throughout the night.

Now Compline is speedily coming to an end; a few verses, the blessing of the Father of the house, and a final greeting to our heavenly Mother in a very beautiful anthem. Then the silence of night!

Lent

1. An established principle of liturgical procedure is to graduate the expression of a festal mystery. Of this we observed an excellent example during Advent; in ever clearer light the Church showed us the coming Messiah until He stood before us in royal splendor. Something similar may be noted in the season preparatory to Easter; here there are three levels, and each has its own inner development.

First level. Pre-Lent—a time of invitation. The Church invites us to make good use of the great season of penance. We already have observed the progression inherent in the liturgical formularies of the three Sundays. In external structure Pre-Lent resembles the *tempus per annum*, with the Alleluia missing.

Second level. Lent, the season of fasting and penance. In the missal this begins with Ash Wednesday, in the Office with the first Sunday of Lent (not until then does the Ordinary of Lent appear) and closes with the Saturday after Laetare Sunday. A good description of this period is had in the words of the preface: "Through bodily fasting You suppress vice, elevate the mind, bestow strength and merit." It is then a season of interior purification and spiritual renewal.

The deeper or mystical import centers in a conflict between spirits, the gigantic struggle between light and darkness. In this war we can distinguish two phases, one defensive and the other offensive. In the first two weeks Christ and the Church seem on the defensive; in the next two weeks they proceed to the attack. For these two phases the Gospels of the first and the third Sundays in Lent give the signal. On the first Sunday Satan confronts Christ and abandons the assault only after repeated advances; on the third Christ takes the initiative, He is the stronger and conquers the strong. On my own personal battlefield I too must turn from passive resistance to open attack upon the enemy.

Third level. Passiontide. This period is consecrated exclusive-

ly to the memory of Christ's sufferings. As early as the Monday after Laetare Sunday the liturgy begins to speak of the suffering of Jesus. In the chants our ear senses laments from the lips of Christ. With Passion Sunday the liturgy abandons its reserve and openly shows us the sacred passion.

2. At the very outset we must take positive steps to acquire the spirit of Lent. Through the vestibule of Pre-Lent we enter the sanctuary of the sacred Easter season. What is the purpose of this portion of the Church year? What can it give us? It gives divine life, and in divine life we have the essence and the end of all Christian piety. Objectively, this life was won by Christ through a hard fight in His bitter passion; subjectively, it is now bestowed in baptism, and renewed in second baptism or penance. In briefest outline this gives the high purposes of Lent.

a) Christ's passion! Already during the Christmas octave and in the Sundays after Epiphany the Church introduced the passion motif; in Pre-Lent it received greater stress and now it becomes the major theme. Christ, the divine Warrior, enters into conflict with the Prince of darkness. During the first half of Lent the interior aspect of the conflict is accentuated, while during the second the motif of physical suffering comes into the foreground and reaches its climax in Holy Week.

Recall that in the Christmas cycle we were not merely interested spectators of the mighty struggle between light and darkness; then as now the mystery is re-enacted in each person's heart: in your soul Christ is wrestling with the devil; or better, by the very fact that you are a member of the mystical Christ you are involved in this fight. At Easter we want to be ready to sing Alleluia with our Leader, but the victory can only be gained by death and crucifixion to the natural man. Therefore we must re-live our Savior's passion in Lent; as catechumens we must die with Christ; as penitents we must die with Christ; as disciples we must die with Christ in order to rise with Him as new men on Easter. Christ's passion, accordingly, is not merely the highest motive for a spiritual renewal; rather

it must be, in the sense of St. Paul, re-lived by us. We must share His sufferings and death.

b) Baptism. Lent is springtime in the ecclesiastical year. From the planted and dying kernels of divine wheat a wonderful harvest will come, souls ripe for baptism. Lent is the ideal season to prepare for baptism.

In the ancient Church baptism was ordinarily administered to adults. After preliminary preparation that often extended over a period of years, select catechumens were numbered among those who desired baptism and then, as postulants, given special instruction as they participated almost daily in the first part of the Mass. Furthermore, they undertook definite penitential exercises and were the object of repeated ecclesiastical exorcisms. The older Masses of Lent come from this time and frequently were designed with special reference to those preparing for baptism. This fact easily explains the confident and at times joyous tone of the Masses; the baptism motif often loses itself in the jubilant motif of Easter. Preparation for baptism had indeed a serious side, for example, the death of the "old" man; it likewise had joyful aspects, e.g., the maternal pride of the Church, internal transfiguration, the coming Easter celebration.

For understanding the liturgy of the season this is of great importance; not the sober and serious mood of penance but a joyful anticipation of baptism is the spirit proper to the older strata of Lenten texts.

c) Lent is also the period for a second baptism, the painful baptism of penance. It is the time *par excellence* for interior purification. In the early centuries sinners were obliged to do public penance during Lent; in a solemn penitential service they received the mourners' garb on Ash Wednesday and thereupon were excluded from community services until Holy Thursday. By way of exception they were allowed to attend the Mass of the catechumens. This third and most recent motif in the Masses of Lent (especially on Thursday) gradually found its way into the liturgy after the catechumenate had ceased to exist.

Century by century greater stress was placed on penance with the result that present day Christians who most often approach Christian life from the viewpoint of overcoming sin, regard Lent simply as a time for special penitential practices.

Let us then feel ourselves as true penitents, on Ash Wednesday let us receive the cross of ashes as a dedication to mortification and self-denial; let us try to submerge ourselves in the purifying stream of Lenten penance.

Whatever our status, whether it be catechumen, penitent, or faithful member of the Church, we must never forget that the main task of the liturgy is not to impart instruction but to bestow divine life. Certainly the Masses of Lent give us advice on spiritual renewal (after the manner of retreat conferences); but the purpose of missal readings is less instruction than a demonstration of the power of grace. This is why the ancient Roman liturgy loved to portray the effect of the sacred mysteries in the Lessons at Mass, choosing scenes from the Old and New Testament which typified the action of grace. The readings, indeed the whole variable text of the Mass, were regarded as parables on the graces of redemption coming to the members of the Church from Christ's death on the Cross.

These graces are granted principally in baptism (penance) and in the holy Eucharist, the two great wellsprings of salvation. The first makes a beginning, the second brings growth and perfection; but both have essentially the same effect. On this account not only the catechumen and the penitent, but also the believer, can observe Lent fruitfully in essentially the same manner. Lent brings the graces of redemption to all; some receive incipient, germinal grace, others the grace of growth or perfecting grace.

A typical example is the Gospel about the healing of the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Here baptism, penance, and the Eucharist are represented in symbolic form. The catechumen is healed in the water of baptism, the penitent in the laver of penance, and the believer in the blood of Christ. Christ performs this miracle now during Lent on a higher level of reality by baptism, penance, and the Eucharist.

Thus the symbolic character of miracles in the Old and New Testaments is of great liturgical importance.

Lent, then, is the time of salvation *par excellence* not only for catechumens and penitents, but for the faithful as well. The catechumens attain their goal in baptism on Holy Saturday, the penitents theirs in the reconciliation of Holy Thursday. Lent is designed to aid them in preparing. And through daily Mass the faithful have the divine life within them enriched and perfected. By Holy Thursday they should be free from all sin and cleansed of guilt so as to appear in the full maturity and perfection of grace on Holy Saturday.

I view Lent, indeed the whole Easter cycle, from the approach of a life filled with God. The Christmas cycle was dominated by the idea of the kingdom of God, a kingdom that was expected during Advent and established at Christmas and Epiphany. Dominating the Easter cycle, however, is the theme of supernatural life engendered, renewed, and perfected. I do not think that this exegesis forces the meaning of the texts.

3. A full appreciation of the Lenten liturgy presupposes acquaintance with the ancient stational observance. On set days the Christian community of Rome assembled in a designated church (*ecclesia collecta*) and then with the Pope passed in procession to another church, the station church (*statio*), which was dedicated to some illustrious saint. There the Eucharistic service was celebrated.

So vividly was the station saint before the minds of the assembled people that he seemed present in their very midst, spoke and worshiped with them. Therefore the missal still reads, "*Statio ad sanctum Paulum*," i.e., the service is not merely in the *church* of St. Paul, but rather in his very presence. In the stational liturgy, then, St. Paul was considered as actually present and acting in his capacity as head and pattern for the worshipers. Yes, even more, the assembled congregation entered into a mystical union with the saint by sharing in his glory and by seeing in him beforehand the Lord's advent in the Mass.

What special meaning, however, did the stational liturgy

have during Lent? The ancient Roman Church desired to sanctify this important season in the life of the mystical Body by daily Eucharistic worship. She wished to intensify the effect of this service by assembling the whole congregation, by the procession, by the stational church. Baptism, penance, spiritual renewal—these were matters pertaining to the whole community. Catechumens, penitents, and faithful should therefore pass together through the streets in song and prayer. The zeal of one should encourage the other, the fresh enthusiasm of the catechumen should edify all. Then also the place, the church of the stational saint, would have a special elevating effect. His example, his words, his very person, stood vividly before the congregation. Such was the method of conversion employed by the ancient Church. The *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis* worked together, the sacramental efficacy of the Eucharist with the powerful psychological impact of the station celebration.

Remember that in the ancient Church holy Mass was not celebrated daily. But in Lent Mass was offered almost every day. The presence of the *domnus apostolicus*, the Pope, the zeal of the catechumens and penitents, the gathering of many Christians from every quarter, a venerable church as the point of assembly, and the grave of an honored saint as the scene of the liturgy itself, the procession, the homily—none of these valuable psychological factors were overlooked. The station often influenced the choice of pericopes and chants to such an extent that these texts can be understood only in the light of the stational context. For this reason we shall always consider them carefully when we explain the liturgy of the Mass.

4. During the season of Lent feasts of saints recede into the background. Rubrics may permit the priest to choose between the Lenten Mass and the saint's Mass (except on first and second class feasts), but one who is sensitive to liturgical propriety will on every possible occasion select the ancient and venerable Lenten Mass. In the following pages, only the Lenten Mass is explained, with relatively little space devoted to the sanctoral cycle. The layman should always pray the Lenten

Mass, even when the priest chooses the festal Mass. Let us hope that many more pastors will emphasize the liturgy proper to Lent for the spiritual profit of their flocks.

The rubrics prescribe that during Lent (except on Laetare Sunday) the tunic and dalmatic are not to be worn by the subdeacon and deacon at Lenten Masses; in the larger churches the *casula plicata* (folded chasuble) should be used. Likewise during all of Lent the altars are not to be adorned with flowers, and the organ remains silent. On the first three days, from Ash Wednesday to the following Friday, Vespers are said at the usual time, but beginning with Saturday the Hour is said before the noon meal (except on Sundays); by this practice the Church wishes to recall and to honor the custom of ancient Christians, who on fast days did not eat before sunset. Compline continues to be recited at the usual time, before retiring.

THE FIRST FOUR DAYS

of Lent are of more recent origin, since the season began on the following Sunday until the time of Gregory I. The formularies for these days are highly didactic and there is a constant effort to instill the spirit of Christian fasting. The main thoughts are: fast but guard against mere external, pharisaical penance (Wednesday); prayer (Thursday); almsgiving and love of neighbors (Friday); observance of the commandments in an attitude of genuine penance (Saturday). These are the major external exercises of Lent.

Represented in the drawing are the three principal Lenten practices recommended by the Church: prayer (the burning lamp), fasting (fish), and almsgiving. Fish, bread and wine, likewise point to the holy Eucharist, nourishment for the soul.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Assembly at St. Anastasia

Station at St. Sabina

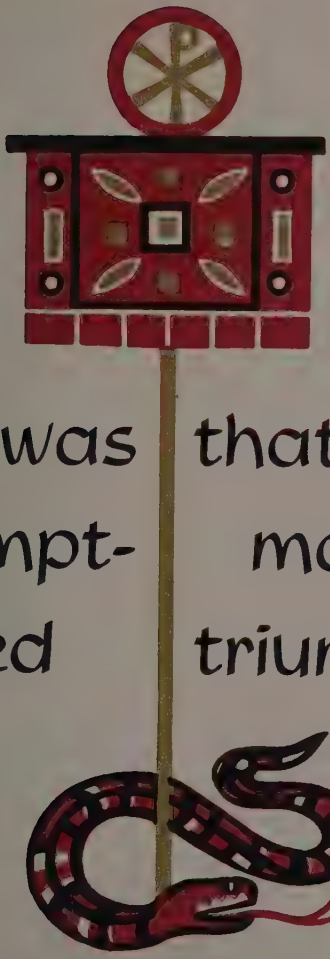
Remember, man, that you are dust!

The day of ashes! In ancient Rome the liturgy was celebrated at two distinct places, viz., at the church of the assembly the blessing of the ashes marked the beginning of the penitential season, while the Mass was offered in the station church.

1. The Blessing of the Ashes. This ceremony in which we participate today is merely a relic of the solemn ritual formerly performed by the bishop with public penitents. Whoever had committed a grave, public sin was bound to submit to public penance at the beginning of Lent. Such was the custom from the fourth until the tenth century. This penance consisted primarily in exclusion from the community's Eucharistic services, but also included the practice of works of satisfaction, prayer, mortification, fasting.

The rite of exclusion from Church functions began with penitents receiving the penitential garb in solemn ritual and having their heads strewn with ashes; then the bishop accompanied them to the gate of the church. This "expulsion" was a moving ceremony and served as a stern warning to all the faithful. As centuries passed the Church mitigated her penitential discipline; and various penances were now assigned in secret. But since the Middle Ages the faithful at large have voluntarily dedicated themselves to the practice of penance by receiving the sacred ashes. Nobles, kings, and emperors, as for example Charlemagne, joined the common throng and barefoot asked to be signed with the sacred dust.

In Rome the blessing of the ashes took place in the basilica of St. Anastasia. In this centrally located church were kept the crosses carried in the stational processions. As the clergy entered an Introit psalm which gave the tone proper to the ceremony was sung: the plight of our own souls affords the best


He was tempted
that we may triumph

motives for penance; but reflection on this condition assumes another direction in the antiphon, "For Your heart, Lord, is so kind. . . ."

Now follow four prayers over the ashes. They have two peculiarities: each prayer is shorter than that immediately preceding, and emphasis on penance becomes progressively less. The first is beautifully constructed, it has three parts and of these the second has four subdivisions. The message briefly is: may the blessed ashes be an effective remedy for the penitent congregation, a sacramental for soul and body. In the second prayer we are reminded of the purpose of the ashes. In full confidence the third prayer asks for rich blessings from the sign of the ashen cross. The penitent Ninivites serve as a type in the fourth prayer. Thereupon the priest distributes the ashes to the faithful, dedicating them to penance during the coming weeks.

The ashes are obtained from olive branches blessed on the preceding

The design summarizes the main thoughts of the day. At the bottom we see the first sad Ash Wednesday, when God said to Adam and Eve: You are dust, and to dust you will return. Death would be their lot. The middle section shows the station church of St. Sabina; the two soldiers remind us that we are entering upon the great battle of Lent. Our efforts should bear fruit in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Above, a monk is sitting, one who "meditates upon the law of God day and night" (Ps. 1). He is a figure of what we should be doing during Lent. We cast the anchor of our little storm-tossed boat around the Cross, putting all our trust in God's mercy. Already the fruit of our Lenten efforts is ripening.

Palm Sunday, "Remember, man, that you are dust!" Recall that these words were first spoken to Adam and Eve in paradise—the first sad Ash Wednesday upon this earth.

During the distribution of ashes the choir chants a number of antiphons that are well suited to the spirit of the occasion. At the end there is another splendid prayer, the ancient *oratio collecta*; this prayer was said in the church where the faithful assembled (or "collected")—hence its name. The Church is gathering her children into battalions; every congregation is a squadron, and thus arranged they proceed to their posts (*statio*) to "fight against the evil spirits." The weapons of defense are the "practices of abstinence."

2. Holy Mass (Misereris). Today our squadron marches to the station of St. Sabina. At her grave and under her protection we begin the battle of Lent. After her maid had converted her, Sabina steadfastly proclaimed the faith and died a martyr's death (cf. Aug. 29). Today she is our model and our leader in the great conflict.

Our spiritual sentiments find good expression in the formulary. Of special note is the spirit of confidence in a merciful God (Christian penance is always wrapped in confidence!). The *Collect*, in which this season of fast is called a "venerable solemnity," asks that the faithful begin the observance of Lent properly and persevere patiently. Two requests: a good beginning and perseverance!

The *Lesson*, a penitential sermon from the prophet Joel, emphasizes two points, viz., inner, personal penance and community penance. "Turn toward Me with all your hearts in fasting, weeping, and lamenting. Rend your hearts and not your garments. . . ." Every social group, children, adolescents, married couples, priests, should participate. The movement must not be one of isolated individuals, but a common dedication to penance. The reading concludes with a glance forward to Easter.

Today for the first time we sing the Lenten *Tract*, a song that will accompany us through the whole season. The *Gospel* is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ speaks of in-

terior fasting, and unveils the soul's greatest enemy, egomania, one that can penetrate and vitiate even such virtues as fasting and penance. Upon comparing the two Lessons some have found a difficulty. In one fasting in community with others is advised, in the other fasting apart from the community. A little reflection on the wider context of the two admonitions will give the answer. The Gospel continues by drawing a lesson from man's propensity to amass property and money. Surely the season of fast is the ideal time for gathering heavenly treasures through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and penance.

The only portion of the Mass that seems out of harmony with our inmost feelings is the *Offertory*, a chant of Easter and victory (Ps. 29). Probably this antiphon echoes the gratitude of the faithful; whereas the penitents were now obliged to leave the house of God, they themselves had remained free of the contamination of sin and were permitted to offer the holy Sacrifice. The *Secret* pleads for the proper disposition to share in the Sacrifice which celebrates and consecrates the beginning of the "venerable sacrament," i.e., Easter.

The *Communion* psalm is the first in the Psalter, others in the series will follow during Lent. The antiphon recommends "meditation upon the law day and night," and points to "fruit in due season," viz., Easter. The *Postcommunion* asks for the grace that our fasting may please God and act as a spiritual remedy. The "Prayer over the People," *Oratio super populum*, now said daily, is one of the liturgy's venerable heirlooms. Today's Oration proceeds in very solemn fashion.

3. Holy Lent. Today we begin Lent, the season of interior, spiritual renewal. We already touched upon the deep meaning of this season; the mystical Body of Christ will be filled with new life in all its members and will free itself from every germ of death. Let us probe into the Mass to see what it says about fasting.

a) The Collect calls Lent the "venerable solemnity of fasting," *jejuniorum veneranda solemnia*. Let us keep in mind that it is Mother Church who is undertaking this fast; that her goal is a more flourishing inner life; that Christ first gave us

His example of fasting. With these facts clearly understood, we will see that fasting is not a burdensome exercise inapplicable to our time, outmoded and supplanted. We must remember that we are members of Christ's Body; by sin we defiled this Body, but now we will help to purify it. Therefore we ask God to aid us in keeping Lent with due piety and persevere with unyielding determination. The Collect, then, seeks to inspire us with reverence for fasting.

b) The Reading sees in fasting a sign of conversion and summons the community to fast. This communal approach to religion must be revived. We have become such individualists that we are ashamed to hold religious observances in common. Even less willingly do people confess their sinfulness in the presence of others. The public penances of ancient times have yielded completely to the secrecy of private confession. The attitude toward fasting has suffered a similar metamorphosis. Today a public fast is hardly known. Nevertheless, in small parishes or rural communities it would still be possible to insist upon certain external observances during Lent.

c) The Gospel apparently contradicts the Lesson on the method of fasting. But the liturgy does not mean to accentuate the evils possible in public fasting. These dangers, condemned by Jesus and manifest among the Pharisees, no longer exist. Today there is no fasting "to be seen of men." The essential lesson contained in the Gospel discourse is that the fast should be a deep inward matter of the soul devoid of all selfishness or ulterior motivation. By examples, the two Lessons show how subjective and objective piety can get along well together.

d) In the Secret, Ash Wednesday is called the "beginning of the venerable sacrament," *venerábilis sacraménti exórdium* (sacrament here in the ancient Christian sense of mystery). In the Postcommunion we beg help from the holy Eucharist so that "our fasting may be pleasing unto God and a helpful remedy to ourselves." Fasting of itself, therefore, is of no value; only when linked with the sacrifice of Jesus does it become useful and meritorious.

4. Psalm 1. The Two Ways. Pope Gregory I made a new arrangement of the Communion chants for the weekdays of Lent. For this he used the first twenty-six psalms in numerical order, and in his day these psalms were actually sung during the Communion. This should be an incentive to devote special time and study to these particular psalms now during Lent. Wouldn't this be an excellent Lenten resolution?

The first psalm serves as an introduction to the Psalter; St. Jerome called it the "Preface of the Holy Ghost" (*Praefatio Spiritus Sancti*). It does, indeed, outline the central theme in the majority of the psalms, i.e., happy is he who fears God, but woe to the godless. The ancient Church was extremely fond of this doctrine of the two ways, the way of life and the way of death. The psalm is easily understood, flowing smoothly along like a woodland freshet.

1 "Happy the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
2 But delights in the law of the Lord,
and meditates on His law day and night.
3 He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
(Whatever he does, prospers.)
4 Not so the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
5 Therefore in judgment the wicked shall not stand,
nor shall sinners, in the assembly of the just,

6 For the Lord watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes."

Content outline of Psalm 1

I. The God-fearing man (v. 1-3)
1. what he does not do (v. 1): he avoids sin
2. what he does (v. 2): he obeys
3. a symbol (v. 3): he is like a fruitful tree

II. The godless man (v. 4-6)
1. a symbol (v. 4): he is like chaff or dry leaves
2. the judgment (v. 5)
3. conclusion (v. 6)

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Station at St. George

Defeat the dragon!

Yesterday Christ enlisted us in the Christian army. Today Mother Church strives to inspire us with courage for the coming battle by leading us through a gallery of heroes.

1. **Holy Mass.** The station is at St. George, whose legendary figure made a profound impression on the ancient Church. Indeed, his deeds were so disfigured by saga and legend that the Church forbade the reading of his Acts. His success in slaying the dragon made him the patron of Christian warriors and knights; at the same time he stands as the great model in the battle against the devil.

His is one of the latest station churches, founded by Pope Leo II (682-683). To this church Pope Zacharias (741-752) transferred the martyr's head, which he had found in the Lateran. The Mass text is related to the station in that both soldiers featured in the Lessons are types of St. George. Two themes underlie the Mass formulary, that of the station and that of Lenten penance.

The *Introit* is addressed to *me* directly by the knight George; it is, therefore, a highly personal message. He describes his

victory over the dragon, a victory gained through prayer. God, eternal and immutable, humiliated the saint's enemies. Still speaking to me, he says, "You too should act in this way; cast *your* cares upon the Lord." He means this not so much in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount's "fear-fraught cares," but rather in the sense that the task of fasting is to be God's work rather than mine. God will "nourish" you; here the liturgy is probably referring to the Eucharist, the true food of Lent! Psalm 54 gives us an insight into the spiritual struggles of catechumens, of penitents and of faithful members of the mystical Christ.

Now the liturgy places a triptych before our eyes; in the middle we see the soldier George, to the left and right stand two Biblical soldiers, King Ezechias and the centurion of Capharnaum. Both of them triumphed through prayer, the first pleaded for his own life, the second for his servant's life. Repeating the main thought of the Introit, the *Gradual* encourages us to put our trust in God who will always hear us even as He heard Ezechias.

Let us not fail to observe how the Mass is directed toward the penitents. It consoles them, it challenges them: "Fight like George, pray like Ezechias, humble yourselves like the centurion. At Easter victory and triumph will be yours." The penitents have lost divine life; now they are weeping as Ezechias did. "He wept with a great weeping!" They are standing before the gate of the Church, praying: "O Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof!" (When we repeat these words before holy Communion, we act like the penitents, even as we followed their example yesterday when we had ourselves marked with ashes.) This helps us see why devout prayers of penance are contained in the Mass, e.g., today's classic *Collect,* the final *Prayer over the People* ("Spare, Lord, spare your people . . ."), the *Communion* chant from the *Miserere* (Ps. 50*). With the humility of the centurion

* During the time of St. Gregory I, Thursdays were still aliturgical; therefore the *Communion* psalm on these days does not follow in regular order.

and the remorse of the penitents, we today approach the celestial banquet.

2. **The Gallery of Heroes.** In her effort to inspire us with courage for the coming battle, the Church puts four heroes before our eyes at the very outset of Lent. It is part of her program to fill us with the "spirit of princes" (Ps. 50), which we need for the maintenance and development of the life of grace.

a) The first hero is the soldier George, the station saint. He proved himself mightier than the dragon, a thrilling accomplishment. Christ also is challenging the powers of darkness; He must fight the dragon from hell and crush his head. The same holds for the mystical Christ, the Church. Catechumens, penitents, faithful — all must do battle with the dragon. I too must fight, that is my duty during Lent. This Lent I must win the holy ground from under the enemy. Today the fighting proceeds under the flag and leadership of the soldier St. George. It is a battle of life or death. Only he who declares total war on the dragon can hope for life in abundance.

b) Our second hero is King Ezechias, one of the best among Juda's kings. Not without good reason could he step before God and say, "I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart!" We should not censure him for weeping so bitterly in the face of imminent death because the consoling doctrine of a blessed life beyond the grave had not yet been revealed. The Church has no intention whatever of culling out this particular action for emulation; rather she wishes to make his bodily illness typify the sickness in our souls in order

to arouse us to weep and pray for spiritual health and supernatural life. As a means to regain physical health Ezechias plunged himself into prayer, now in Lent we should pray with unusual fervor and patient perseverance for recovery from the wounds of sin.

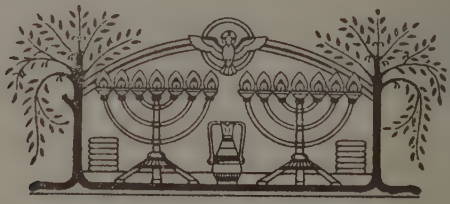
c) Spontaneously we feel sympathetic toward our third hero, the centurion of Capharnaum. He is the standard-bearer for the Gentile world. His virtues make him a splendid model, his love toward a slave, his humility in the presence of Christ, his faith, his conscientiousness to duty! Jesus Himself lauded him as a Gentile who surpassed the Jews in faith. This man has proven himself worthy of being our spiritual guide. His victory was one of humility as he cast all his anxiety about his servant upon the Lord. And the particular lesson inculcated by the liturgy? Do for your souls that which the centurion did for his servant.

d) The fourth hero is the king of all heroes, *Christ*. Lent is a preparation for sharing in His great Easter victory. Daily we assemble for the holy Sacrifice of the Mass which makes present the heroic battle upon Golgotha. In His triumph the successes of our other three heroes are included; yes, in His triumph the Lenten battle of the whole Church and of all her members is contained. Let us unite ourselves with Him, and draw strength from His promise of victory.

The principal point in the Mass formulary should be singled out for further emphasis. There is a parallelism between the two Lessons in that both show deep anxiety about life. In his death agony Ezechias begs for life and is answered. The centurion begs for the life of his fatally stricken servant and he immediately recovers.

Now the Thursday Masses have the penitents in mind. Being dead before God, they plead for resurrection to life and health. The means which the penitents must use are prayer (Ezechias) and humility (the centurion). What applied to the public penitents is likewise applicable to us. Like our two heroes we must use every means to safeguard our supernatural life. Prayer and humility are two excellent ways of growing

in grace. Let us be filled with the courageous "spirit of princes," the heroism of our four models. Abandon the broad roads of the world running through the low places and climb the steep heights of Christian perfection.



FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Station at Sts. John and Paul

The spirit of almsgiving

Yesterday the Church showed us a picture of conflict and victory; today she unrolls before us the peaceful scene of "two olive trees in the garden of God." Special stress is laid upon the Lenten practice of almsgiving.

1. Holy Mass (Audivit). Today the station is the basilica of the two holy almoners, John and Paul. This Church, originally the private house of the two saints, became the official residence of the Roman deacons and thereby a house of hospitality for the poor, the neglected, and the unwanted. These martyrs (see June 26) were highly honored in Rome; the Breviary calls them "men of mercy, two olive trees, two shining lampstands before the Lord." They distributed their personal fortunes among the poor, "in order to be able to begin unencumbered their journey to eternity." Beneath the present building traces of the original home may still be seen.

With a prayer of thankfulness on our lips we go to church. Why are we thankful? We are thankful because God is merci-

The Office calls the day's stational saints "two olive trees, two shining lampstands." They were noted for their works of charity (bread, wine), while over their every act hovered the Spirit of love (Postc.).

ful to us; for whether we are among the penitents or the catechumens, it is God who in His mercy "has received me" (*suscepisti me*) into the number of His children (*Intr.*). Let us pray all of Psalm 29; it is an Easter song which gives us the right spirit of Lent, a time not intended solely as a season of penance, but rather an opportunity to be re-enriched by the graces of baptism.

The *Collect* begs God to look down kindly upon us now at Lent's beginning. In the two *Lessons* the Church enlightens us on what the love of neighbor really means. In the *Gradual* we beg to dwell in the house of our heavenly Father, "One thing I ask of the Lord — that I may dwell in the house of God." Our two holy patrons dedicated their home and property to God as a church; now they are asking (and we join them) for admittance to their heavenly Father's mansions. At the *Offertory* we beg for the grace of becoming docile and obedient children of God, the most excellent way of showing our love. In the *Secret* we pray for the grace to worship worthily at the altar and through a continual sharing in its blessings find our salvation.

The *Communion* admonishes us to serve God in child-like fear and joy, to embrace the "discipline" of Lent and thus to stand well-equipped for the great battle within us between Christ and Satan (Ps. 2). As fruit of the Sacrifice we beg for the spirit of divine love, since we have eaten of "the one bread from heaven." Through the whole Mass runs the warm tones of God's fatherly goodness and Christian childlike love. The *Prayer over the People* reminds us that no worldly power can harm us if we refuse to be ruled by evil passions.

2. Almsgiving. In the church of two illustrious patrons of the poor the liturgy gives us a sermon on how to give alms. Almsgiving, one of the three practices peculiar to Lent, and fasting go hand in hand. During Lent we must make our offering regularly, no matter how small. Now because the Church wishes to renew us interiorly, she immediately instructs us on the spirit proper to almsgiving. Almsgiving may be called the fruit on the tree of love of neighbor. Recall that on Quinqua-

gesima Sunday the Church proclaimed the canticle of love; she wanted you to realize that the very essence of your Lenten reform is love, a love that bears all things, that denies itself, that never ceases.

Today's two Lessons deal principally with love. And how beautifully the thoughts are expressed! "Loosen the knot of anger, destroy the bonds of oppression, liberate the enslaved, and break every yoke! Give bread to the hungry, give shelter in your own house to the poor and homeless. If you see someone naked, clothe him, and do not despise your own flesh. Then will your light break forth like the morning, and your healing will swiftly follow. Your justice will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will accompany you. Then if you call, the Lord will hear you; if you beseech Him, He will answer: Lo, I am here. For I am merciful, I, the Lord your God."

In the Gospel Christ too proclaims the commandment of love: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." As the fruit of today's Sacrifice Mother Church begs the spirit of love in behalf of her children: "Pour into our hearts the spirit of Your love, O Lord, and make all those whom You have filled with the one bread of heaven to be of one heart" (Postc.).

Almsgiving also attacks and defeats the evil spirit of avarice or self-love, a vice which eats at the very nerve of Christianity; this is why our Lord spoke so strongly on the subject. For selfishness renders the good exercises of fasting, prayer, and even almsgiving itself worthless. In the Gospel today Christ warns us, "When you give alms, do not sound the trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets that they may be honored by men." In the Office the Church emphasizes two Gospel axioms that should be stamped in large letters in the book of our soul. "When you give alms,

do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." "When you pray, go into your room, and having closed the door, pray to your Father!" (Vespers).

Let us keep this thought in mind: the giving of alms manifests and fosters the spirit of love, it banishes every selfish urge.

3. A Hymn of Christ the King. Few, if any, of David's Messianic songs surpass Psalm 2 in popularity and beauty. We may entitle it, "A Hymn of Christ the King." St. Bernard called it "the roaring of the Lion of Juda" resounding against His enemies. The song begins very dramatically as it places us in the midst of the battle against the kingdom of God:

The figures to the right and left in the drawing come to mind as one begins Psalm 2. In the center the Messiah-King is enthroned upon Mt. Sion, the Holy City (the Church). With His "rod of iron," the holy Cross, He overcomes the dragon who embodies all movements hostile to God. Christ is holding a scroll (i.e., the Gospel teaching) with the words from the psalm, *Et nunc reges intelligite.* Kings and their subjects should make efforts to familiarize themselves with the word of God. The hand of the heavenly Father pointing downwards through clouds is a symbol common in ancient Christian art. Here it recalls the mission of the Son of God. The note of victory is emphasized by the wreath of palm which adorns the centerpiece.

1 "Why do the nations rage
and the peoples utter folly?
2 The kings of the earth rise up,
and the princes conspire together
against the Lord and against His anointed:
3 'Let us break their fetters
and cast their bonds from us!'

4 He who is throned in heaven laughs;
the Lord derides them.
5 Then in anger He speaks to them;
He terrifies them in His wrath:
6 'I Myself have set up My king
on Sion, My holy mountain.'

7 I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:
The Lord said to Me, 'You are My Son;
this day have I begotten You.
8 Ask of Me and I will give You
the nations for an inheritance
and the ends of the earth for Your possession.
9 You shall rule them with an iron rod;
You shall shatter them like an earthen dish.'

10 And now, O kings, give heed;
take warning, you rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before Him;
with trembling pay homage to Him,
12 Lest He be angry and you perish from the way,
and His anger blazes suddenly.
Happy are all who take refuge in Him!"

Outline. Beautifully and symmetrically constructed, Psalm 2 consists of four distinct stanzas:

1. Rebellion of earthly kings against God (v. 1-3)
2. God's answer (v. 4-6)
3. The Messiah's first proclamation (v. 7-9)
4. A lesson for all rulers (v. 10-12)

This psalm is peculiarly appropriate and easily applicable under present world conditions, for now as seldom before are the enemies of the Church "raging and uttering folly."

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Station at St. Tryphon

Motivation for observing Lent

The day shows no advance in the Lenten theme. Rather it affords a breathing space in the work that has been begun.

1. Holy Mass (Audivit) is a heterogeneous composition. The older missals contain no Mass on this day because the vigil of the first Sunday of Lent was celebrated during the preceding night; consequently no services were held on Saturday. This is the reason why today's formulary has no chants of its own (those given are borrowed from Friday). References to night and watching in the Lessons seem to indicate culling from an old vigil Mass.

Nor has the station church remained unchanged down through the centuries. When the church of St. Tryphon was destroyed in the 18th century, the nearby church of St. Augustine was accorded its stational privileges. To this edifice the relics of the holy martyr Tryphon were transferred (see November 10). To the left of the choir rest the remains of St. Monica, brought here from Ostia. St. Augustine's, then, is indeed a venerable edifice! The *Gospel* concludes with the incident about the people who crowded around Jesus and touched His garments in order to be healed. This passage was usually associated with the miracles which occurred through contact with the relics of the holy martyrs.

The four Orations deserve special attention. First we petition God's assistance to observe zealously the solemn fast ordained as a remedy for body and soul (*Coll.*); note the lofty phraseology used. The *Secret* is a genuine offertory prayer: Accept this sacrifice (the Eucharist) by which You are appeased; may its fruit be that we bring to You an acceptable and pleasing disposition of mind after we have been purified by the inner power of the sacrament. The *Postcommunion* continues the same profound strain: Nourished by the bread from heaven, may we attain to life eternal. The *Prayer over the People* singles

out for emphasis the power and efficacy of the Eucharist to make us frequent communicants and to confer gifts that endure forever.

2. **Motives for Keeping Lent.** Until now the Church has been imposing severe precepts: fasting, prayer, almsgiving. Ours must be a heroic life, for these virtues are supreme accomplishments of love. Under the strain we might lose courage. Therefore the Church now grants a pause. Today she issues no new injunctions, but proclaims a joyous message. She gives us a glimpse of our reward, comforts and strengthens us in battle.

The Lesson (a continuation of yesterday's) strikes a happy vein: "When you pour out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will rise up in darkness, and your darkness be as the noonday. And the Lord will give you lasting rest and will fill your soul with brightness, and you will be like a watered garden and like a fountain whose waters never fail. And the places that have been desolated for ages will be built through you; you will lay foundations for many generations; and you will be called: 'The repairer of ruined walls, the architect of peaceful streets.' I shall lift you up above the high places of the earth and nourish you with the inheritance of Jacob your father."

Translated into our idiom what does this passage mean? Lent is springtime in the soul, days when the life of grace streams abundantly into our hearts. The Lesson describes this springtime under various figures, viz., as light that rises in darkness (the symbol of light occurs very frequently in the Bible and in the liturgy); as a well-watered garden, in which as in a paradise the flowers of virtue are thriving and the fruit of good works is present in all abundance.

There is something exceptionally gripping in the third picture; you are laying foundations for coming generations, i.e., you are building the kingdom of God. Every Christian is a stone in the structure of this temple, or better, each one is a foundation stone upon which the lives of fellow Christians are constructed. Think of the saints whose example and ac-

complishments influence human life for centuries. Do you wish to be such a builder? Your work of fasting will help many others.

The last picture points to heaven. The high places on earth and the inheritance of Jacob are terms for eternal glory. How unconquerable we children of God are! We need fear nothing if we avoid but one thing, sin. As the Israelites marching into the Promised Land were unconquerable as long as they remained loyal to God, so we too may be.

One may derive great comfort from the Gospel. The account is a stirring one. We see the apostles rowing against a stiff wind and making no progress; meanwhile Christ is praying on the mountain. Then at the fourth watch of the night He comes into the little boat, and the voyage proceeds smoothly. Such is our life. In our little boats we row against the wind and make no apparent progress. Haven't you complained often: I'm just not getting anywhere! Doubtlessly the child of God will always find it necessary to row against the wind. Nature, flesh, the world, the devil, are all united against you. And yet, up on the mount of heaven Someone is praying—Christ the Mediator.

Jesus' prayer on the mountain, however, is also the prayer of the mystical Christ, the Church. Moreover, He Himself comes daily into our boat of life "at the fourth watch of the night." For in the Mass this type turns into reality. Jesus comes and with His help any task is easy. With His assistance we will finish our difficult voyage through Lent and anchor

The design portrays the Reading from Isaias. Center: your light will rise up in darkness . . . you will be like a fountain whose waters never fail. Left: you will be like a watered garden. Right: you will lay foundations for many generations.

happily on Easter Sunday. With His help, that is, with the *viaticum* of the Eucharist, we shall continue the rugged way of life and finally attain our eternal goal.

Let us now touch upon some of the texts concerning *life* in the Mass formulary. The Collect assures us that the "solemn fast has been instituted that souls and bodies may receive health"; spiritual health is equivalent to the life of grace. We must not overlook the conclusion to the Gospel; a great number of sick persons were brought to our Savior and by touching the hem of His garment all of them were cured. Christ continues this work of healing in His Church, and the hem of His cloak is the Eucharist, the "gift of heavenly life."

3. Divine Office. The Venerable Bede explains our Gospel in a masterly way, "The work of the disciples at their rowing and the adverse wind signify the manifold troubles of holy Church. In the midst of storms she makes every effort to arrive at the shores of heavenly peace as in a safe harbor. Therefore it is well said that the ship was upon the open sea, and He alone upon the shore; for often the Church is not only beset, but also besmeared by such fury on the part of unbelievers that it seems her Savior had utterly abandoned her—were that indeed possible.

So amid the stormy waves of a hostile world and the temptations of hell she cries with a beseeching voice: 'Why, O Lord, do You stay so far from us, veiling Your face when we are in need?' (Ps. 9. Here the Church gives us a hint on how to pray the psalms of petition.) Yet He is not unmindful of the poor man's prayer, nor does He turn His countenance from those who hope in Him. Rather He strengthens those who wrestle with the enemy that they may be victorious, and bestows upon the victors an eternal crown. Therefore, this too is said: He saw how they were straining at the oars. Yes, the Lord sees those who struggle at sea, though He Himself stands upon the shore. Though He may seem to delay His help a while, He strengthens them with glimpses of His goodness and keeps them from weakening during their tribulations."

4. The Value of Fasting. Is fasting really worthwhile? Whenever I consider the value of a religious practice, I always look into the earthly life of our Savior. He is our model. He

dwelt with us in order to teach us how to form our lives inwardly and outwardly. Christ Himself fasted often and accorded it high praise in His teaching. Recall how He fasted forty days before entering upon His work of teaching. At the beginning of Lent the Church wishes to stamp this fact deep in our hearts: our fasting must be in union with and in imitation of Christ's.

I call to mind the mystery-laden, pregnant words spoken by our Savior when the disciples, unable to cure a possessed boy, asked, "Why could we not cast him out?," and Jesus answered, "This kind can be driven out in no way except by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). This reply has always made the deepest impression on me. Prayer and fasting are extraordinary means (we may call them *violent* means) when other simpler ways are of no avail against the powers of hell.

Now another saying of Jesus comes to mind. When John's disciples began to reproach Him, "Why do Your disciples not fast?," He replied: "Can you make the wedding guests fast as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; in those days they will fast" (Luke 5:35). There is a hidden depth of meaning in these words. The coming of Christ among men was a wedding feast. Fasting had no place. But it is most proper to fast when the divine Bridegroom is taken away. Fasting on Fridays and during Holy Week, then, is in accord with Christ's own wishes.

I should like to cite one further passage from the Gospel, one which casts light on fasting from another direction. Once our Savior compared Himself with the Baptist in these words, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a devil!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold a glutton and a wine drinker.' " John was a man devoted to penance, an ascetic, who fasted throughout his life. Not so Christ. His way of living was not based exclusively upon self-denial and mortification, but upon an ordered en-

joyment of life. So we learn from the Savior that fasting should be the exception, not the rule, in Christian morality.

To complete the lesson let us consider for a moment the passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus speaks of the three important pious exercises of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. He highly recommends all three, but warns against practicing these virtues in a pharisaical manner.

The main points in Jesus' doctrine on fasting, then, are: 1. fasting is an extremely important means of resisting the inroads of hell (hence Lent). 2. Fasting should be practiced as a memorial of Christ's death (Friday, Holy Week). 3. Fast days occur by way of exception in Christian life, they are not the normal practice. 4. Fasting holds a place alongside prayer and almsgiving as a pious exercise.

And now the question, how was fasting practiced in the ancient Church? Before me lies a venerable document from the first Christian century, the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" or the Didache. It says, "You should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays," in contrast to the Jews "who fast on Mondays and Thursdays." And in another place, "Before baptism he who baptizes and he who is baptized should fast, and some others also if possible; be sure to instruct the catechumen to fast one or two days before his baptism." Here we have a clear statement on the practice of fasting in the Church about 90 A.D. Fasting was then understood to imply—unlike our ideas on the matter—not merely abstinence from meat or limitation to one meal, but complete abstinence from all food.

I could now quote from individual Fathers of the Church; there is hardly one who does not strongly recommend fasting. In the Office, for example, we read a sermon by St. Basil the Great (d. 379) on fasting. He scans the whole religious history and shows what mighty deeds were accomplished through fasting and what dire misfortunes were due to immoderation.

And if, finally, we analyze the liturgical texts on the subject of fasting, we find nothing but the highest praise. The finest and briefest summary is found in the Lenten Preface—three short, pregnant statements—"Through bodily fasting You sup-

press our vices, elevate our minds, bestow strength and merit." A whole philosophy of fasting in one sentence!

THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

With first Vespers, ~~sung today before the noon meal~~, the season of Lent begins in all its liturgical fullness. Though the Hour has no antiphons of its own as in Advent, it does have a proper chapter, and the hymn is from the Common of Lent. Today's Vespers give us a preview of the various themes stressed on the first Sunday of Lent. The chapter proclaims that now the season of grace has dawned. The Magnificat antiphon comforts us with a promise from the lips of Mother Church, "Then if you call, the Lord will hear you; if you cry aloud, He will answer: 'Here I am.' "

After the four days of serious initiation, the Church begins Quadragesima proper on the first Sunday of Lent. Solemnly the Mass introduces us into the coming season and outlines a program of action. The first two weeks illustrate how Christ's battle leads to victory, a guarantee that our Lenten struggles too will end in the transfiguration of Easter.

In the coming week the Church keeps the Ember days, a venerable and important liturgical observance. The three Ember Masses (Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday) are very old; emphasis is placed on a genuine Lenten theme, i.e., through fasting and self-denial to the glory of spiritual resurrection.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Station at St. John Lateran

Christ leads the way as a penitent and as a soldier

1. Preliminary Remarks. On Septuagesima Sunday we went on pilgrimage to the grave of St. Lawrence, on Sexagesima to that of St. Paul, on Quinquagesima to that of St. Peter. Today the Church leads us to the basilica of the "Most Holy Savior," the mother church of Roman Christianity. This in itself points to the day's importance. Yes, in the church of St. John the

Baptist, the man of the desert, we accompany the Savior into the desert for His forty day fast; in this same church of the Baptist forty-two days from now we shall celebrate the Easter mysteries on Holy Saturday. With heartfelt devotion and in all seriousness, let us dedicate ourselves today to the work of baptismal renewal. Thus the station church provides a worthy frame for the day's Lenten message.

Today's liturgy stems from a very early date. Few formularies equally ancient and classic in structure can be found in the missal. Three topics are developed: a) a Lenten program to which all are invited; b) a model to be imitated; and c) a battle song.

a) With unusual solemnity the Church issues the invitation to keep Lent. I like to compare it to the invitation on the first Sunday of Advent. The liturgy regarded the whole Christmas cycle as one day, whose early dawn was the first Sunday of Advent, with Christmas as the sunrise, the Epiphany high noon. Something similar is the case in the Easter cycle. The whole period is the "day of salvation" which is now dawning; at Easter the sun will rise, and at Pentecost it will blaze from heaven's heights. The Church reminds us of our responsibility "not to receive the grace of God in vain."

Now the program for Lent. Actually we have already heard much about this during Pre-Lent, viz., the invitation to God's vineyard; our task of preparing the soil for the seed; the excellence of charity. Today the Church outlines another program. More important than fasting, prayer, or almsgiving is a perfect Christian life, one which meets and masters every problem that arises. The Church formulates such a program in the antiphon at sunset, "Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation! In these days let us conduct ourselves as servants of God in much patience, in fasting, in vigils, in unaffected love."

This, then, is your main task: to live perfectly as a Christian, to keep your heart holy, unspotted by sin or selfishness. How wonderfully Paul describes his own approach to life and places it before us for imitation, "Whether we are regarded as de-

ceivers or as honorable men, whether we are held in esteem or dishonor, whether as dying although we live, as chastised but not killed, as sorrowful yet ever joyful, as poor yet enriching many, as having nothing yet possessing all things. . . ." Such is the Christian in his outward poverty and inward riches. Lent should help us acquire both virtues—having nothing, i.e., holy fasting, while possessing all things, i.e., God's abundant graces.

b) The Gospel shows us Christ in a double role, as a penitent and as a warrior. First we follow Him as the penitent *par excellence* into the desert of self-denial to fast with Him for forty days. Our fast will be spiritually fruitful if we keep it in unity with Him, if it is an extension of His fasting. Awareness of the union between the members of the Body and their Head ought to arouse a greater respect toward Lenten practices. The fast of Christ formed a part of His work of redemption; for us too the forty day season of penance contributes to His mission of constructing God's kingdom on earth. The next six weeks may well be the most important time of the year. In any case Head and members are now entering upon the great season of penance.

Our Redeemer also goes before us as a warrior. We see the divine Hero victorious on three fronts. Two princes stand face to face, the Prince of this world, and the King of God's kingdom. The Prince of this world deploys his whole army: the

Ancient coins represent the standard of Constantine piercing a serpent, as in the design. On the banner were pictures of the emperor and his sons — here it is a picture of Christ, one fashioned after the very ancient representation in the apse of the Lateran (today's station). It is given in the form of a shield (Ps. 90). Thus the drawing epitomizes the day's liturgy: Christ conquers the powers of hell (in His temptation; in us); He likewise is our shield as we struggle along in fasting.

world and its splendor, hell, the ego with its insatiable desires. But Christ emerges as the winner.

Now the battlefield is not far from any one of us; it is in my soul where the higher and lower man are ranged against each other. Christ in us must be victorious. From this conviction flow strength and solace; we are not alone in the battle, Head and members fight together, Head and members win together. Thus the Gospel is our first lesson in the training school of Christ; today we are raw recruits, at Easter we will be proven soldiers.

Formerly, perhaps, we performed our Lenten tasks in private, apart from the community, but now we are beginning to see that we should act as members of the Church, of Christ. The Collect says, significantly, that God "purifies His Church by the observance of a forty day fast." Every sin we commit is a stain upon the mystical Body as well as upon ourselves; every virtue that adorns our soul also adorns the robe of Mother Church with new lustre. We must become like our Head, Christ, in all things—here on earth in abasement, in heaven in glory. The work of fasting contributes to this transformation.

c) Keeping the above in mind it will be easy to see how Psalm 90, which takes so prominent a place in today's liturgy, serves as a most appropriate battle song throughout Lent. Psalm 90 describes a terrible battlefield: thousands fall to the right and to the left, arrows whir, asps and dragons block the way. . . . Yet God's heroic army fears nothing; each soldier is divinely protected, and angels guard their paths. Deep trust in God takes the place of weapons. With heart and mind filled with the prayer sentiments which are on our lips, we courageously begin the battle. Our strongest weapon is the "Most Holy Savior" Himself, in whose church we stand. We cannot but be aware of His protection. At the door of the station He stands and encourages us, "If he asks Me, I will answer him. I will deliver him and glorify him; with a long life I will gratify him" (Intr.). As we approach the altar (the altar is Christ) at the Offertory and Communion, we will realize more vividly how Christ in the holy Sacrifice is a protecting shield and an overshadowing wing (Off. and Comm.).

2. Holy Mass (Invocabit). The Mass formulary, a very ancient one (Leo I, c. 450, was already acquainted with its Epistle), is classic in its simplicity and structure. In the *Introit* Christ receives us as His fellow soldiers with words of comfort; after the battle of Lent He will deliver us through (Easter) baptism and glorify us with endless life. The Introit is a text which invites deep scrutiny. Christ, the Master of the station church, greets us with a cheery welcome as He promises a) to listen to our requests; b) to transform us with the grace of glory; c) to reward us with eternal life.

According to the *Collect* God "purifies" His Church by the forty day fast. Lent, then, means spring house-cleaning in God's temple. It likewise points out the two best brooms for the task, abstinence and the practice of good works. In the *Epistle* the Church solemnly invites us to begin Lent in all earnestness and presents us with a program of action. Beginning today she takes the catechumens under her protecting wings; all hell may be loosed against them, yet they are safe, for the heavenly host accompanies them. We sing the *Tract*, Psalm 90 practically in its entirety, as an introduction to the Gospel. As we march in

The picture illustrates Psalm 90. Equipped for battle the Christian engages the enemy. Arrows whir on every side; those struck down to the right and left are represented as Egyptians (not unusual in the liturgy). The hand of God is a sign of sure help; angels protect and carry Christ's soldier and cover him with their wings. Fearlessly he tramples upon lions and dragons. In this warrior we may also see Christ as He triumphs over Satan (Gosp.). Ancient Christian reliefs picture our Redeemer in this manner (see Wilpert).

the Eucharistic processions at the *Offertory* and at the *Communion,* we feel ourselves soldiers in Christ's army, protected by "the wing and shield" of God, viz., the Eucharist.

The *Secret* notes that we are today observing the solemn beginning of Lent and begs that bodily fasting may temper our sinful desires. The *Postcommunion,* too, is classic: May the holy offering of Your sacrament renew us (*restauret*), O Lord; and having purified us from ancient guilt (*vetustas*), may it enable us to share in the mystery of salvation. These phrases sum up the whole purpose of Lent, which is designed to blot out "ancient guilt" or the "old man," and initiate us into the Easter mystery, the *consortium mysterii salutaris.*

3. Divine Office. Today's Office is like an old landmark; seldom do we find a formulary so outstanding in artistic perfection. The lessons of the first nocturn (which continue the Epistle) proclaim the Church's Lenten program. During the second nocturn we hear an inspiring Lenten sermon by Pope St. Leo I. In the third nocturn Gregory the Great rises as our teacher and delivers an instructive discourse on the Gospel. Paul, Leo, Gregory—all three saints speaking to us from Rome!

The responsories for the nine lessons are rich in thought, emotionally touching and structurally artistic; penance and other typical Lenten virtues serve as themes. For example,

"Let us correct what we have unknowingly done amiss, lest, suddenly surprised by the day of death, we seek time for doing penance and cannot find it.

Take notice of us, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against You.

Help us, O God our Savior; for Your name's sake redeem us, O Lord."

"Rend your hearts and not your garments, and be converted to the Lord your God;

For He is merciful and kind.

The evildoer must leave his sinful path, the unjust man his evil plans; he must return home to the Lord, who will be gracious to him.

For He is merciful and kind."

From a Lenten sermon of Pope St. Leo I. "Dearly beloved: How could I more fittingly begin my sermon to you on the holiest and greatest of fasts than with those words of the apostle Paul, in whom Christ spoke: 'Behold, now is the time rich in grace; behold, now are the days of salvation.'

Although, in fact, there is never a time which is not filled with the gifts of divine grace, and even though by God's grace His mercy is always accessible to us, nevertheless the hearts of all should be animated by a greater trust and moved by a more intense fervor to advance spiritually at this time. For now the return of that day on which we were redeemed urges us to the pious performance of every act of virtue, that with cleansed minds and purified bodies we may celebrate the all-excelling mystery of our Lord's sacred passion.

Indeed, mysteries as great as these have a claim to such unceasing recollection and continual worship that we should always abide in the presence of God in the manner which is becoming during the feast of the Pasch. Yet such virtue graces few; and while austere practices are mitigated because of the frailty of men, and while the concerns of this life demand manifold attention, even the hearts of the saintly become tainted with the dust of the world. Therfore, dearly beloved, the kindly providence of God has provided a holy retreat of forty days during which we are to regain purity of soul, and by pious works and chastening fasts blot away and atone for the sins of other times."

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Peter's Chains

The Good Shepherd in Lent

1. At the beginning of each new period of the ecclesiastical year, we find a Good Shepherd Mass (cf. second Sunday after Easter, Tuesday after Pentecost, third Sunday after Pentecost). In the various seasons Christ shows Himself as the Good Shepherd, each time in a different way. Today we have the first of the instruction services for the catechumenate (I would compare it to the Mass of the Holy Ghost at the beginning of a school term). For the first time the candidates for baptism come be-

fore the Lord. With wide-open eyes they stand there and look upon the picture of the Good Shepherd who today adds them to His flock.

The station is the basilica of St. Peter's Chains. This church, in which we are now gathered together in spirit, is one of the twenty-five titular churches established in the fourth century. Within its walls a special chapel in memory of St. Peter's imprisonment in Jerusalem had been dedicated before the year 400, and from the fifth century onward the iron chain has been venerated with which Peter was bound. August 1, the anniversary of the church's consecration, is kept as the feast of St. Peter's Chains. The stational church seems to have affected the formation of the Mass text, e.g., the two Readings: Peter, as the first representative of the Good Shepherd; "I was in prison" (Gosp.); the Prayer over the People, "deliverance from the bonds of sin."

2. Holy Mass (Sicut oculi). Thinking of Peter in chains, the catechumens (and the faithful too) step before Christ like fettered slaves and look at His forgiving hand that He may have mercy and bestow baptismal grace (a genuine *Introit*). In the *Collect* we (catechumens, penitents, and faithful) ask that "this forty day fast may speed our progress!" *Epistle* and *Gospel* have strikingly similar general themes. Both are addressed primarily to the catechumens, while not excluding the faithful; the Good Shepherd is seeking His scattered sheep (baptism) in order to pasture them (Eucharist) upon fertile fields on the mountains of Israel (the Church).

At the same time He develops His program for Lent, "What is lost, I will seek; what is scattered, I will bring back (catechumens); what is broken, I will repair (penitents); what is weak, I will strengthen; what is strong I will preserve (faithful). . . ." In these words lies the Church's entire work of Easter renewal. The *Gradual*, "Look upon us, our Protector," echoes the Epistle and introduces the Gospel—surely the Good Shepherd is the best protector imaginable. The *Gospel* shows us the figure of the Good Shepherd at the parousia (second coming). Two important lessons are taught here, a) we will

be judged according to the measure of our love toward neighbors; b) in all things we should see Christ.

In the *Offertory* Jesus' words come true as He receives our gifts to the poor. And meanwhile we look up docilely to our Shepherd to hear His commands, especially His "mandatum" of love. Today's *Communion* is another of those classic chants which can be fully appreciated only when sung during the distribution of holy Communion.

3. The Lenten Readings. If Lent is the Church's annual retreat, then the Lessons are the conferences. If Lent should effect a renewal of our whole inner life, then the Lessons present the Church's teaching and admonitions on how we must reform and improve our conduct. Therefore we must ask ourselves daily, "What does the Church intend to teach us today?"

In ancient times the catechumens were prepared for baptism during Lent. Today's Mass may be regarded as their first day at the school of divine service, one in which teacher and pupils

The design. The Lesson presents Jesus as our Good Shepherd, while in the Gospel He appears as the great Shepherd of all nations at the Last Judgment. Both these ideas are portrayed in the picture which is drawn after a mosaic in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. This mosaic proves that the early Christians related the parousia to the Good Shepherd motif: Christ refreshes His sheep on the meadows of heaven. Note the words: "Come, blessed of My Father." During Lent the invitation is directed to the catechumens in a special way.

meet each other—a meeting mainly in terms of the parable of the Good Shepherd and His sheep. Imagine yourself among the catechumens, and feel yourself a lamb in the presence of the Good Shepherd. Hardly any other figure was as popular in ancient Christianity. It was seen in the catacombs, it shone from the apse of basilicas, it was found even on tombstones. Some representations show the Shepherd carrying the sheep on His shoulders, in others the sheep are hurrying to Him, or the Shepherd is feeding and caressing them.

Today's Mass is dominated by this Good Shepherd motif. The Mass aims to make catechumens, penitents, and faithful rely wholly upon Christ, the Good Shepherd, and to trust themselves without reserve to His guidance. Let us note how beautifully this mutual good will, this "knowing one another," is expressed by dramatic dialogue in the various parts of today's Mass.

a) In the Introit the sheep speak. Picture to yourself the catechumens standing in church for the first time; wide-eyed they behold the splendor of God's house. But being still quite shy, they call themselves slaves, not sheep. The stational church, St. Peter's Chains, reminds them of their bondage, as the humble prayer comes from their lips: "As the eyes of slaves are upon the hand of the master, so our eyes turn unto God. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us!"

These are indeed most appropriate words upon the tongues of catechumens. So we too should feel upon entering God's house. A real Kyrie! Let us analyze this spirit further. I am a slave, the property of God. Proudly St. Paul called himself the slave of Christ. That means complete devotion, constant alertness to any word or gesture from on High; such is our relationship to God and Christ.

b) In the Lesson Christ replies. He addresses His own as sheep. It is a splendid selection, one which may be placed alongside the beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd in the Gospel. The Good Shepherd unfolds His Lenten program. He intends to gather scattered sheep, viz., catechumens. This activity He

still exercises—through His mission work in pagan lands as well as here where the Church is more firmly established; and we resolve to help Him. Christ intends to let His flock graze upon the mountains of Israel, leading them to lush pastures. He wants to be the Shepherd and let His sheep rest—these statements refer to the faithful. Symbolized here is the life of the Church with the Eucharist, holy instruction, and the pastoral guidance of souls. We can imagine no finer figure.

And now a summary of His Lenten work: "Whatever is lost, I will seek (catechumens); whatever is scattered I will lead home; whatever is broken, I will repair; whatever is weak, I will strengthen (penitents); whatever is strong, I will guard (the faithful)." Yes, the Good Shepherd wants to serve everyone. Now, during Lent, He wishes to care for me in particular. What is scattered and broken in me? What is weak? What is firm and strong?

c) In the Gradual the sheep answer. Already they are more confident; no longer do they stand there trembling. To Christ, their protecting Master, they call, "Look upon Your slaves."

d) Words from the Good Shepherd come to us in the Gospel. We see the figure of the Good Shepherd at His second coming on the last day, a grand picture! He shows Himself as a good and at the same time a just Leader. We take home two important lessons: first, love of neighbor is God's norm in judging. We recall that on Quinquagesima Sunday the Church proposed love as the main objective of our Lenten striving. Secondly, we must see Christ in all things. Ours must be a living faith in Christ's presence. Christ and the Church are synonomous. The altar is Christ, in the Gospel Christ speaks and appears, our neighbor is Christ. Only when we really grasp this profound truth will the full meaning of the liturgy be evident to us.

e) Again at the Offertory it is our turn to speak. The Offertory is the most human act of the entire Mass, for there we give what is most dear to us. Today we give the Good Shepherd our good will and our obedience. The Offertory chant means: I want to be an obedient sheep. How beautifully this

thought is unfolded in other verses of the same psalm, "Teach me, O God, Your law. I will walk in the path of Your precepts, I will keep your commandments faithfully. May Your mercy come upon me, because Your law is my meditation and my endeavor, and Your precepts my joy."

f) At the consecration we see the Good Shepherd laying down His life for His sheep, and in the Communion verse we again hear His voice, "Come, blessed of My Father." Already we sense His invitation which will ring out on the day of judgment; now in holy Communion we hear Him by way of anticipation, since holy Communion is a foretaste of heaven while on earth.

Let us remain blissfully conscious of this blessed truth throughout the day: over us is a good and zealous Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and we have resolved to be obedient sheep!

4. Psalm 3. Trust in God. Although in present day missals Psalm 3 does not appear with the Communion antiphon, it belongs there according to ancient plan. Tradition ascribes the psalm to David, the royal singer. We will not be wrong if we adhere to the general opinion that this psalm was composed while King David was fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom. Upon learning of the revolt David with some friends left the Holy City and crossed over to Olivet. On that mount, despite great danger, he lay down to rest. With unusual mental calm he arose the next morning, and perhaps immediately his meditation of the previous night took form in the song we call Psalm 3.

It requires true greatness of soul to direct one's thoughts with calm confidence toward God and attain peace of mind and rest of heart just when the work of a lifetime threatens to collapse before one's eyes. The royal psalmist masterfully depicted what took place within him. Step by step he portrayed his inner dispositions. And since each step is clarified by a stanza, the composition falls into four distinct parts.

"O Lord, how many are my adversaries!
Many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
'There is no salvation for him in God.'

But You, O Lord, are my shield;
my glory, You lift up my head!
When I call out to the Lord,
He answers me from His holy mountain.

When I lie down in sleep,
I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.
I fear not the myriads of people
arrayed against me on every side.

Rise up, O Lord!
Save me, my God!
For You strike all my enemies on the cheek;
the teeth of the wicked You break.
Salvation is the Lord's!
Upon Your people be Your blessing!"

5. **The Divine Office** echoes the Gospel theme throughout the day. In the rising sun we see symbolized the eternal Judge, "Come, blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world" (Ben. Ant.). At sunset we again hear our Judge speaking, "What you have done for one of these, the least of My brethren, you have done to Me" (Magn. Ant.).

Thoughtfully and prayerfully let us conclude with this responsory, "Fasting and weeping the priests must plead: Spare, Lord, spare Your people. Do not abandon Your inheritance to destruction. Between the porch and the altar the priests must weep as they plead: Spare, Lord, spare Your people. Do not abandon Your inheritance to destruction."

Pilgrims to Rome are wont to obtain little replicas of St. Peter's Chains, as shown in the picture.

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Anastasia

The ways of God and the ways of man

The Masses of Lent are not cast from the same mold nor do they date from the same period. The oldest are probably those of the three *Feriae legitimae*, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On these days the formularies usually are slanted toward the catechumens. The Mass liturgy on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays comes from a later period and is more dogmatic in nature. Here we find various themes such as suffering, penance, the way of Christian life. Today's Mass is an example of the latter.

1. **Holy Mass (Domine refugium).** Station at St. Anastasia. Of the stational saint, whose feast occurs on December 25, the Martyrology says: She suffered harsh and cruel treatment from her husband Publius, but frequently received comfort and encouragement from St. Chrysogonus. Condemned for professing the faith, her hands and feet were tied to stakes and a fire lit around her. Thus she died a martyr's death.

The station, one of the old titular churches (fourth century), is the only church in that area of ancient pagan Rome where the great monuments of the forum dominate the scene. In front of the church stretches a much frequented business square with two markets; here the booths of the money-changers stood. The stational procession crossed this square on the way to St. Anastasia's. This fact possibly influenced the choice of the Gospel on the cleansing of the temple, perhaps also the Lesson concerning the ways of God and the ways of man.

The Mass begins with Psalm 89, unredeemed man's cry of longing for the gleaming day of Easter. (Pray the whole psalm). The answer to this most excellent *Introit* comes in the *Lesson* given by the great Lenten preacher Isaias: "Seek the Lord while He can be found. Let the godless man abandon his ways, for the Lord is very ready to forgive." Our good

Father is waiting with open arms to give the kiss of peace. It is not a weakly prompting on the part of grace; no, the impact of actual grace is very strong, it does not come in vain from heaven.

The wonderful melody of the *Gradual* almost paints the rising clouds of incense and the lifted, praying hands. The *Gospel* gives a clear insight into God's way and man's way: Christ pitted against the desecrators of the temple, the singing children over against grumbling Jews. In the *Offertory* I put my lot, *tempora mea*, into God's hands that it may be transfigured, elevated, and transformed by the radiant beam of His divine countenance (the altar is Christ).

Briefly, concisely, the *Secret* addresses God, "Be appeased by the gifts we offer and protect us from all dangers." The *Communion* (i.e., Ps. 4 in its entirety) depicts clearly the transfiguration of our way and how it differs from the activities and aspirations of worldly men. Lent serves to make our sinful, human ways the even ways of God. May we receive the full effects of that salvation of which we have received a pledge in these sacred mysteries (*Postc.*). Remove all evil from Your Church, O Lord! (*Prayer over the People*).

2. Meditation. The Lessons forming part of recent Mass formularies help us to understand the message proper to today's text. On Sexagesima Sunday the Church showed us how Lent is springtime for the soul, *ver sacrum*, how we now must sow the soil of our hearts. The effectiveness of grace depends upon man's cooperation. Last Sunday, in the Epistle, the Church solemnly invited us to make good use of these weeks of grace, Lent. "We admonish you not to receive God's grace in vain. Now is the time rich in grace, now are the days of salvation." The meaning is clear. It is extremely dangerous to toy with the grace of God. Today the Church continues this thought and speaks of the effectiveness of grace and the tragedy of rejecting it.

a) In the Epistle we hear a powerful preacher of penance, Isaias: "Seek the Lord while He can be found; call upon Him

while He is near. Let the godless man abandon his ways, the unjust man his wicked desires. Let him return to the Lord! Our God will have mercy on him, for He is very ready to forgive." These words peal out as a true gospel to the ears of sinners. A good Father has opened wide His arms to receive prodigal sons and welcome them with the kiss of reconciliation.

The message is not a weakly counsel on the part of grace; no, its knocking is strong, persistent, powerful. The prophet compares the activity of God's words to rain which does not fall in vain from heaven, "As the rain and snow that come down from heaven do not return but soak the earth and water it and make it bud and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be; it shall go forth from My mouth and shall not return to Me void; it shall do whatsoever I please and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it."

Grace, then, affects and transforms the soul like a fruitful rain. The message is the same as on Sexagesima, the figure only is different. There seed, not rain, represented grace. The Parable of the Seed brought out another aspect, a dark and somber one, in the working of grace. If good ground is not sown with good seed, thistles and thorns will grow in still greater profusion. Grace produces its effect unfailingly, it never returns void; either it hallows or it hardens. Therefore it is extremely dangerous to leave grace unused.

b) The efficacy of grace is illustrated by an example from the Gospel. It is Palm Sunday. Christ enters the temple. For the Jews His arrival in Jerusalem was an occasion of special grace, days of rain for souls spiritually parched; but only to some did it bring blessing, to others damnation. The Pharisees became more callous and decided upon His death, while the blind, the lame, the children gathered about Him and cried out, "Hosanna!" At the present moment the Savior is coming to the Jerusalem of your soul. Welcome Him for your own good, do not crucify Him by sin!

c) Yet another striking Lenten picture is flashed before us, Christ cleansing the temple from buyers and sellers, "My house should be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a

den of thieves." In the Office this passage occurs twice, in the morning and in the evening; it is, therefore, a leading thought for the day.

The temple is man's body and soul. Each person is God's temple, but by sin it may become a thieves' den. "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you? Bear and keep God in your body!" Certainly we want to purify this temple of all stains and blemishes. Who is the thief? The devil. Why? Because the soul is not his; it belongs to God, from whom he steals it. No, the soul must not become a thieves' den, it is a house of prayer, a place of sacrifice. This is our task for Lent. Let us clean away the foul spots in the holy temple of our bodies as we proceed toward the bright feast of Easter.

We already sense the glow of Easter light when we pray the Collect, "Grant that our souls as they cleanse themselves by chastising the flesh may become radiant through longing for You," or when we sing at the Offertory, "Make Your face shine upon Your servant and in Your mercy give me salvation." Today's Mass, then, may be entitled, "Through Lent to Easter glory."

3. **During the entire Office** our thoughts center upon the cleansing of the temple. As a result we see with great clarity how the sanctity of God's house and the holiness of individual souls is of highest importance for the mystical Body.

"Jesus entered the temple of God and expelled all the sellers and buyers; the tables of the money-changers and the stands of those who sold doves He overturned" (Ben. Ant.).

"It is written: My house is a house of prayer for all peoples; but you have made it a den of thieves. And He was teaching daily in the temple" (Magn. Ant.).

"The wicked man must abandon the way of sin and the unjust man his evil thoughts; let him return to the Lord who will be merciful. For the Lord our God is kind and merciful, and very ready to forgive. The Lord does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live" (resp.).

4. **Psalm 4.** In the opinion of Scripture scholars Psalm 4 must be ascribed to King David. Its content reflects the crisis

to which it owes its origin. The people of Israel had taken sides with David's rebel son, Absalom. The king's life was in danger as he fled from the royal palace. A battle between father and son was imminent in the plains beyond Jericho. The king's heart was heavy, but his courage did not fail. His confidence, his unshakable trust in God broke forth into song and with this song he sang away the sorrows of his soul. And we are richer for his splendid meditation, one which answers the question: In times of misfortune what is a believer's relationship to God, his enemies, and his friends? The psalm accordingly has three stanzas, of which the second and third are about equal, and the first, which probably was meant as a kind of prelude, is considerably shorter.

"When I call, answer me, O my Just God,
You who relieve me when I am in distress;
Have pity on me, and hear my prayer!

Men of rank, how long will you be dull of heart?
Why do you love what is vain and seek after falsehood?

From the liturgical viewpoint, Psalm 4 tells of four blessings: light, joy, peace, hope. In the picture light is represented by the sun (and sign of the Blessed Trinity) directing its rays upon the child of God; joy is symbolized by the cluster of grapes and stalks of wheat (the psalm refers to abundant harvests of grain and wine); peace is portrayed by the dove with olive branch, and hope by the anchor. Mother Church is sleeping peacefully on this anchor knowing that it rests firmly upon a rock foundation. She is the wise Virgin who during the night awaits the Lord with burning lamp (baptismal grace).

Know that the Lord does wonders for His faithful one;
the Lord will hear me when I call upon Him.
Tremble, and sin not;
reflect, upon your beds, in silence.
Offer just sacrifices,
and trust in the Lord.

Many say, 'Oh, that we might see better times!'
O Lord, let the light of Your countenance shine upon us!
You put gladness into my heart,
more than when grain and wine abound.
As soon as I lie down, I fall peacefully asleep,
for You alone, O Lord,
bring security to my dwelling."

THE EMBER DAYS OF LENT

The Lenten Ember days are the most recent of the four sets and do not have the same importance as the other three, since the whole of Lent is devoted to spiritual renewal. Doubtlessly the three days, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, formed part of the Lenten liturgy from its very beginning, as can be seen from the formulary content. Wednesday, devoted to our Lady, is a day of reflection and spiritual orientation; Friday emphasizes conversion and penance; Saturday, a preview of Easter, marks the renewal of our baptismal covenant.

There may well be a relation between this week's Ember day liturgy and that of the first Sunday of Lent. Christ fasts

Here the artist pictures the trinkets so highly esteemed by the children of this world: baubles, liquor, pleasure, money, honor. These things resemble the bubbles blown by children, but ensnare their devotees in the thornbush of sin. *Ut quid diligitis vanitatem* — Why do *you* love vanity?

forty days and conquers the devil. Moses and Elias, representing the Old Testament, also fast forty days (even the paralytic's thirty-eight years have an affinity to the number forty.) On Ember Saturday, Christ, Moses, and Elias appear together on the Mount of Transfiguration. Thus the Ember days do not fail to contribute their share to the theology of Lent.

EMBER WEDNESDAY

Station at St. Mary Major

Moses and Elias fast

1. The Stational Church, St. Mary Major. On all four Ember Wednesdays the stational service was observed in the largest church of our Lady in Rome. This basilica, which dates from the fourth century, was rebuilt by Pope Sixtus III (431 to 440), and dedicated to our Blessed Mother as a result of the Council of Ephesus' definition of the divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary.

It is probable that in the second half of the fourth century the Ember day observance was rearranged and the three great churches (St. Mary Major, Holy Apostles, St. Peter) were selected as stations.

Today, then, we pilgrimage to the largest and most venerable shrine of our Lady in the world and honor the Mother of God as our patron. The humble guise in which we meet her in the Gospel serves as a model for Lenten humility. Nevertheless, we are promised a participation in her dignity, i.e., we are destined to become "mothers and brothers to Jesus," if we do "the will of His Father." Thus Mary is our companion during Lent.

2. Holy Mass (Reminiscere). There are signs of venerable antiquity in the Mass' three Lessons, for the Law, prophet, and Gospel address us in turn. Quotations from Psalm 24, expressing sorrow and suffering, are used for the first three chants. It would seem as if the reason for the lament were persecution by some external enemy, but sin too is mentioned. In the

Beside restful water He leads me;
He refreshes my soul.

prayers we beg for pardon and protection from sin. Without hesitating we may say that the Mass is serious and penitential in tone.

Devoutly and suppliantly we enter the stational church, reminding God of His never failing mercy and begging for liberation from oppression. The kingdom of God never lacks enemies. By the *Introit* psalm the soul is filled with confidence toward God and inspired with greater devotion. The first *Collect* continues the thought of the Introit and begs for protection against the enemy; the second reiterates the common Lenten motif, viz., bodily fasting as a source of spiritual refreshment. Notice how the first two *Lessons* conclude with the same words, "forty days and forty nights." Moses and Elias are observing their forty day fast, Moses in closest intimacy with God, Elias while wandering in the desert.

Which of the *Gospel's* several themes is dominant is not too clear. First there is the stational theme, the scene with Mary; then that of suffering, because Jonas, who was three days in the belly of the fish, typifies Christ's death. (The Office stresses this passage.) It is more difficult to place the incident of the unclean spirit. Does the liturgy intend to warn us and the catechumens? In any case the passage can be related to the penance theme which forms so large a part of the Mass.

The *Offertory* apparently is connected with the concluding words of the Gospel, "Whoever does the will of My Father. . . . I will meditate upon Your commandments, which I love exceedingly." The penance motif appears in the *Secret*: this Sacrifice will wipe out our sins and give strength to failing hearts. The fifth psalm is used at the *Communion*, continuing the Lenten sequence. It is framed with a fervent antiphon; what we are asking for as fruit of the Sacrifice becomes clear from the general content, viz., help in the troubles of God's kingdom, especially in the fight against sin. The *Postcommunion* follows the same trend. Only the *Prayer over the People* has a more positive character as we petition light for our minds and strength for our wills. It is a pearl among prayers.

Glancing over the entire composition we see four names,

Christ, Moses, Elias, Mary; they are our Lenten preachers. The spirit of the chants and prayers is usually grave, reflecting a consciousness of sin.

3. Our Lenten Preachers. Four preachers speak to us on the subject of Lent. Three of them will appear again at the end of the week and on Sunday, robed with the light of glory. They will show us the ultimate fruit of Lent, transfiguration.

a) Christ. Our Lord began His public work as Redeemer by a fast of forty days. Through fasting He prepared for the inevitable encounter with the devil; this battle began with the three temptations last Sunday and now continues in the Gospel story. Fasting will equip us too for the struggle, that life-and-death encounter between the higher and lower forces in the human soul. It is a war that is fought to its final conclusion between Christ and the devil. The Lenten preface puts it concisely, "Through bodily fasting You subdue our passions."

b) Moses ascended the sacred Mount of Sinai in order to enter into holy intimacy with God and to receive the Commandments and a Law for his people. He prepared for this task by a fast of forty days. In a soul bound to God dependence upon earthly possessions vanishes; then fasting and prayer be-

In the design we see today's four Lenten preachers: Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, teaches us to do God's holy will; Moses climbs Mt. Sinai in order to receive God's commandments; Elias reminds us that we do have excellent nourishment at hand while fasting in the desert of Lent; Christ, indicated by the monogram, triumphs over the strong one.

come a strength giving nourishment while engaged with God. Christ Himself said, "This kind (of evil spirit) can be expelled only by prayer and fasting." The Lenten preface expresses the same truth in a more positive way, "Through bodily fasting You lift up our minds."

c) Elias fasted during his desert wandering, walking forty days by the power of heavenly food to God's mountain, Horeb. Lent is a rough desert track up the mountain of Easter, and life itself is a desert road upward to the mountain of heaven! We resemble Elias; the holy Eucharist is our Lenten bread, our life's bread. Truly a long road lies before us, but in the power of this food we will surely arrive at the mountain heights of Easter. Again a phrase from the Lenten preface, "Through bodily fasting You bestow strength and merit." See how the Law, the prophets, and the Gospel agree on the importance of fasting.

d) After these three models of the Lenten fast the Mother of God comes to teach us the great lesson of doing God's holy will. The Gospel presents Mary in a very subordinate role; yes, Christ seems to disregard His mother, while He embraces His disciples and calls them "mother and brothers" if they fulfill the will of the heavenly Father. It is Mary who leads the Offertory procession today, "I will meditate upon Your commandments. I love them exceedingly." These words on her lips are simply another expression of her life motto, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Your word." The perfect fulfillment of God's holy will is Lent's greatest challenge.

Psalm 5. A Prayer on the Way to Mass. We know nothing about the author of this psalm. It will be easier to appreciate the prayer, if we imagine it coming from the lips of a priest or levite on his way to the temple early in the morning for sacrifice and prayer. Without difficulty this setting can be applied to Christian life, and we could then entitle the psalm, "A Prayer on the Way to Mass." The composition has many points to qualify it as appropriate at the beginning of the day. Relative to content it is divided into five stanzas which are quite similar in external form.

Hearken to my words, O Lord,
attend to my singing.
Heed my call for help,
my king and my God!
To You I pray, O Lord;
at dawn You hear my voice;
at dawn I bring my plea expectantly before You.

For You, O God, delight not in wickedness;
no evil now remains with You;
the arrogant may not stand in Your sight.
You hate all evildoers;
You destroy all who speak falsehood;
The bloodthirsty and the deceitful
the Lord abhors.

But I , because of Your abundant kindness,
will enter Your house;
I will worship at Your holy temple
in fear of You, O Lord;
Because of my enemies, guide me in Your justice;
make straight Your way before me.

For in their mouth there is no sincerity;
their mouth teems with treacheries.
Their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.
Punish them, O God;
let them fall by their own devices;
For their many sins, cast them out
because they have rebelled against You.

But let all who take refuge in You
be glad and exult forever.
Protect them, that You may be the joy
of those who love Your name.
For You, O Lord, bless the just man;
You surround him with the shield of Your
good will.

THURSDAY DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Lawrence in Panisperna

The Canaanite woman, a model for penitents

The Thursday Lenten Masses follow a very definite mold, they are penitential in character and are oriented toward the penitents. When these Masses originated in the eighth century, the penitential discipline was at its height and its spirit dominated Lent. An indication of this attitude is had in the Gospel. While the "children" (the faithful) eat bread at the sacred repast in the church, the "dogs" (penitents) stand outside the door and wait for some few crumbs to fall from the table of the Lord.

1. **Holy Mass (Confessio).** The stational church is St. Lawrence in Panisperna, the place where according to an ancient tradition St. Lawrence was burnt to death on a gridiron. The crypt is honored as the exact spot where the holy martyr died. With the introduction of the stational service on Thursday (under Pope Gregory II at the end of the 7th century), the church served as the site for today's liturgy.

The stational setting has influenced the Mass text to a considerable extent. The first three chants refer to St. Lawrence; the *Introit* paints his glorious death as a witness and martyr (the same Introit as on his feast, August 10). As a stational church it was exceptional for its beauty; the Introit, therefore, may be regarded as the astonished cry of those entering. The entire psalm extols the greatness of God, but the liturgy loves to praise the greatness of God in His saint.

Our vignette recalls the station church of St. Lawrence, where the grid on which the saint died is shown. The breadbaskets and wheat point to the day's Eucharistic themes.

The *Gradual* too has ties with our stational saint, for in Psalm 16 we find the verse which the martyr is supposed to have uttered at his death, "You test my heart, searching it in the night. You try me with fire, but I am without sin."

In the *Offertory*, which contains an allusion to his martyrdom, we join Lawrence in Christ's sacrifice (an angel comforted him while suffering on the grill and wiped away his sweat). As early as Septuagesima Sunday Lawrence was a Lenten preacher working and fighting in the vineyard. Daily in the official thanksgiving after Mass we ask "that as Lawrence overcame the flames of fire we may extinguish the flames of passion." Surely then the Church wants Lawrence to stand before us as our model and patron during this season of penance and fasting. When it is our turn to lie upon temptation's grill, we too must remain steadfast.

The *Collect*, taken from yesterday's Mass, emphasizes the relationship between fasting and almsgiving. The *Lesson* contains grave words from the lips of Ezechiel, the prophet of penance. These words were selected to instill both fear and consolation in the hearts of penitents: the sinner will die, the just man will live! A highly developed liturgical sensitivity is manifested in the choice of the Gospel. Through her faith and humility the Canaanite woman became a prototype for penitents.

The *Secret* stresses the fact that fasting enhances the personal value of holy Mass. During the entire Sacrifice the Church keeps reminding us that Thursday is devoted to the holy Eucharist. When the Canaanite woman speaks of the crumbs from the children's table, we think of the Bread given to God's children; they are so fortunate as to receive a renewal of divine life, now during Lent, through this very Bread, Bread denied to the penitents. Because the penitents were obliged to leave the church after the Gospel, the faithful gave greater attention to the bread offered at the altar, and, as a result, sang the Communion psalm with the familiar antiphon, "Taste, and see how sweet is the Lord."

Again at *Communion* time the chant is Eucharistic, "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." In the *Prayer over the People* the priest beseeches "that all Christian peoples may fervently love the heavenly gift they receive so often."

2. **Humble Consciousness of Sin.** In the liturgy of Lent we can distinguish three strata. The oldest is primarily concerned with the catechumens; it is positive in content and is oriented toward the grace of baptism. The second stratum considers the spiritual life of the congregation and stresses fellowship, love, and serving God. Of paramount concern to the latest layer are penitent sinners; here consciousness of sin is emphasized. We know that the Sundays, Ember days, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays belong to the oldest layer; to the middle layer belong the Tuesdays and Saturdays, to the newest belong the Thursdays. In our souls, too, there are these three layers, and this enables us to benefit from all the Lenten Masses.

The Thursdays are days of penance, designed to arouse in us a consciousness of sin. It has not perhaps been wholly beneficial to Christian piety that in the last few centuries the faithful have become almost totally absorbed by sin consciousness. Much positive good has been lost in the process. Yet, in our more positive attitudes toward supernatural life we must not forget that we are sinners, that we have a nature inclined to evil, that we must never lull ourselves into a false sense of security.

If we look into the past we must admit that there is much for which to take blame, much that is incompatible with the nobility of our status as Christians. If we look into the present, we recognize evil inclinations, passions, and daily omissions. For the future we should make solid resolutions to improve and to avoid the occasions of sin. It is necessary, especially in Lent, for us to look deeply into the soul and to become really acquainted with ourselves, lest we fall victim to self-illusion.

The best safeguard will be humility and constant awareness

of our unworthiness. It is exactly this that the Canaanite woman teaches. We must put ourselves in the place of the poor penitents and feel unworthy to eat the bread of heaven at our Father's table; we are, indeed, like dogs that wait for falling crumbs. Such sentiments sincerely felt indicate a humble consciousness of sin.

Let us then put on the garb of penitence and with the penitents stand at the church door. Three illustrious penance preachers address us today, Lawrence, Ezechiel, and the Canaanite woman. Lawrence, our choir leader and stational saint! We see him on the glowing grill, a torture he bears with such joy that he jests with his executioners!

And to me he says, "Your grill is life with its limitations, its sacrifices, its hardships. Endure this grill patiently. Be moderate in your desires; be content, yes, be happy over the things you have. That is your most fruitful penance." What did the apostle Paul tell us last Sunday in the Epistle? Let us show ourselves servants of God in every situation.

Ezechiel, the prophet and preacher of penance, next pricks my conscience, "Do not try to blame others, hold yourself responsible for your errors." Blaming others has been a human weakness since the time of Adam, who shifted the guilt upon his wife, while she in turn blamed the serpent. God will surely allow any mitigating circumstance its full weight; but with yourself you should be a strict unsparing judge. An excellent guiding principle would be: strictness with oneself, lenience with others.

The liturgy has a special affection for the Canaanite woman because it sees in her a model for penitents. What is her sermon? Perseverance in prayers of petition and humble penance. She did not become discouraged even when Jesus coldly disregarded her request. Such perseverance indicates great humility.

How did she accept humiliation? When the Lord compared her to a dog, she took the comparison and made it the basis of her reply: Yes, I know that I am but a dog, and I will be

satisfied with the crumbs that fall from the table. With this she passed the test — whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Humble penance! By it we cut off the root and source of all evil; by it we vanquish our sensitivity, our ambition, and our pride.

The two songs at sunrise and sunset repeat the beginning and the end of the Gospel story. "Behold, a Canaanite woman came out of that territory and cried, 'Have mercy on me, O Son of David'" (Ben. Ant.). "O woman, great is your faith; your petition is granted" (Magn. Ant.). By these words the Church implies that throughout the entire day our minds and hearts should radiate the spirit of the Canaanite woman; in the morning we stand before God in great need of help, in the evening we show strong faith.

Today the Office contains a special, exceedingly beautiful responsory that is directly connected with the Gospel (there are only a few such cases during Lent): "I would be comfortless, did I not know that You are merciful, Lord. You have said: I do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live. The woman of Canaan and the publican You called to penance. As great as was my soul's sorrow, so great now is my heart's joy and solace."

EMBER FRIDAY

Station at the Twelve Apostles

See, you are healed! Go now, and sin no more

Christ is the "Healer" of catechumens, penitents, and ordinary "good" Christians. We are like the paralytic, we have been healed by Him in the pool of the Church (baptism and Eucharist).

1. Stational Theme. As we learned in Advent, the stational service on the four Ember Fridays has taken place since very ancient times in the basilica of the Twelve Apostles. Grisar supposes that this church was Rome's official penance or reconciliation church. It is indeed striking that three of the

four Ember Friday Gospels give a lesson on penance, and on Easter Thursday, when the station is the same, the Gospel is about the penitent Mary Magdalen.

Today the Church preaches penance in various ways. The twelve apostles stand before us. They too are penance-preachers, especially the first two: Peter, down whose cheeks fell tears of remorse for his denial, and Paul, who is a model for faithfulness after conversion. In the station church rest the bodies of the apostles Philip and James. James the Less was a man devoted to prayer and fasting. It would be quite in order, then, to observe the present Ember Friday as a day of penance for the past quarter year.

Around the basilica there were porticos and pools; perhaps these influenced the choice of today's Gospel on the man sick for thirty-eight years. Since in ancient times the Romans loved to keep the holy places in Jerusalem vividly before them, it is not improbable that one of these pools was called Bethsaida. Ranke observes that our Friday is "exactly the thirty-eighth day before Easter . . . the suffering of the sick man is compared to the mourning period of Lent and his cure to the joyous days of the Lord's resurrection."

2. Holy Mass (De necessitatibus). The Mass opens on a solemn penitential tone with verses from Psalm 24 for the

The design. The Gospel account on the miracle at the Pool of Bethsaida (a figure of baptism) is linked in symbol with the Offertory, "Your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Through the waters of baptism and by the food of the Eucharist we obtain and increase our grace-life in the Church (five arches). The twelve foundation stones represent the station church of the Twelve Apostles.

Introit, "Look upon my misery and my sorrow, forgive all my sins." It is the voice of a sick man (myself) calling. Bowed down in spirit we beg for mercy in the *Collect*; it is God Himself who subdues our wills; may He strengthen us with His kind assistance.

During the *Lesson* our Lenten preacher Ezechiel impresses two profound sentences upon our hearts, one of solace, the other of warning. "God will forgive all your sins if you are sincerely repentant. God will reject the just man if he turns away from justice." No pharisaical certainty then about salvation! No boasting over past virtue! The *Gradual*, a plea for health and supernatural life, serves as a connecting link between the two Lessons.

The *Gospel* is a classic example of what may be called a liturgical mystery play. You are the sick man. The Sabbath day of healing is Holy Saturday, anticipated in today's holy Sacrifice. In the Gospel we see why the two sacraments, baptism and Eucharist, are inseparable; they are the paschal sacraments which bring into being a new man free from sin, free from the evil dispositions of the past. Do not accent the differences between baptism and Eucharist, both have the same purpose and effects. In baptism one receives sanctifying grace as a seed, in the Eucharist in the fullness of its growth. Therefore, it is one and the same whether we come to the font of baptism or to the Mass; in both instances we receive the graces of redemption. This truth is important for a correct understanding of the Lenten Masses.

At the *Offertory* we give fervent thanks for the grace of our Christian vocation and baptism; in today's Sacrifice, as at baptism, our "youth is renewed like the eagle's." An exceptionally beautiful Offertory verse! "Accept, Lord, the gifts procured by our labors" (*Secret*).

For the *Communion* we pray the first penitential psalm, Psalm 6, fully conscious, however, of having been pardoned and healed. We bear Christ in us; by His presence He destroys every enemy of salvation. The mood of the healed invalid is likewise well expressed in the psalm, "I am languishing . . .

heal me . . . I drench my couch with weeping. . . ." May our participation in the holy Sacrifice purge away our sins and vices (*Postc.*). In the *Prayer over the People* we ask for the light of God's grace.

3. The Grace of Conversion. Ember Friday is the liturgy's "Yom Kippur." Today we cast all our "sins and omissions" of the last three months before the feet of our merciful God. First God speaks to us through the penance-prophet, Ezechiel. Two pithy statements will remain engraved upon our hearts, one of comfort, one of warning. God pardons if we are sincerely repentant, He forgives and forgets our sins. Do we realize what this means? In Psalm 31 David described how he suffered, tormented by the consciousness of guilt: "The hand of God lay heavy upon me, the goad pierced deeper and deeper!"

The fallen angels found no forgiveness! By His death on the Cross, however, Christ purchased for us the joy of pardon and gave us the sacrament of penance as an Easter gift. Not only will our sins be forgiven at some future date, we can be certain of forgiveness here and now! We need not pray to God in doubt, the *Ego te absolvo* is a sure guarantee that God has buried my sins. O, let us highly esteem the happiness of a clear conscience!

But the prophet gives us a warning, too, one similar to Paul's, "Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall!" No pharisaical illusions about one's own salvation! No frivolous assumptions! No boasting of former virtues and holiness! Even oaks have fallen!

The Gospel describes a touching incident of divine call and human response. The man paralyzed for thirty-eight years, whom God calls, is you. The porches with the sick represent the unredeemed world, a great hospital for diseased souls. The pool of healing is the Church, for in the water of baptism she cures men from the illness of their sins. The Redeemer called and healed one of the crowd — see the secret of selection and vocation!

Do not inquire why this one is taken and not another; God

looks farther than you! Rather ask, why have I been chosen? It is an undeserved grace, the grace of vocation and conversion. You must be zealous in keeping this grace alive. Look to St. Paul as a shining model; until his death the remembrance of his conversion moved him to tears. And you? Are you as zealous as during the first weeks of your conversion? Or is the proverb of the new broom that sweeps clean applicable?

Our Savior concludes with an admonition which actually says the same things as Ezechiel, "See, you are healed! Go now, and sin no more, lest some worse fate overtake you!" For his sinful youth this man received a severe penance. To be paralyzed for thirty-eight years is a real purgatory, but yet a small punishment compared to eternity! "Sin no more!" is the grave obligation imposed by Jesus, perseverance to the *end*.

With fear and trembling let us strive for our salvation. We know full well that we can never merit this grace, but one assurance we have, the holy Eucharist. "He who eats My flesh abides in Me and . . . has life everlasting." The holy Eucharist is the sacrament of final perseverance. During Mass today the twelve apostles stand around the altar; they preserved the grace of conversion until the end. May they now pray for us that "our youth may be renewed like the eagle's" (Off.), and that God may show us the light of His grace (Postc.). Life, rich and full and free from disease — that is the goal of Lenten renewal. Today's Mass has again expressed this truth very clearly.

4. Divine Office. St. Augustine endeavors to explain the number 38 allegorically. This procedure strikes us moderns as somewhat farfetched, but the thoughts he proposes are suitable for meditation: "The number 40 contains a certain perfection. . . . Scripture proves this often. You know well that fasting is sanctified by this number (a forty day fast was already in vogue about the year 400!), for Moses fasted forty days, Elias the same length of time, and even our Lord and Savior observed a forty day fast.

Moses represents the Law, Elias the prophets, and Jesus the Gospel. Therefore, three appeared on the mount when the

Lord showed Himself to His disciples with glorified face and raiment. He appeared in the midst of Moses and Elias to indicate that the Gospel was confirmed by the Law and the prophets . . . In sorrow, therefore, we observe the forty days before the paschal feast, but with joy we celebrate the fifty days after Easter, as when a reward is received."

Perhaps the two antiphons at sunrise and sunset were selected with reference to baptism ("The angel of the Lord used to come down from heaven; and the water was troubled") and penance ("He who healed me, He commanded me: 'Take your bed, and walk in peace' ").

"Fasting has opened the gates of paradise. Let us embrace it with prayer and weeping, that we may rejoice with the Lord on the day of resurrection. In all things let us show ourselves as servants of God, in great patience. That we may rejoice with the Lord on the day of resurrection" (resp.).

5. Psalm 6. The First Penitential Psalm. According to its superscription, Psalm 6 was composed by King David. It is divided into three stanzas:

1. A plea for pardon (do not be angry, have pity, heal me)
2. Reasons for forgiveness
3. Confident of a favorable answer

The design. The figure drenching her bed with tears is Mother Church weeping over her children. One may also think of the individual soul repenting and sorrowing over sins committed. And since the picture illustrates Psalm 6 we may apply both prayer and picture to the great atonement Sacrifice of Christ. The hand of God with beams of light signifies that divine justice has been appeased and that God is now willing to give pardon and assistance. The thornbush on the left and the blooming roses on the right show the change from tears for sin to confidence in God.

"O Lord, reprove me not in Your anger,
nor chastise me in Your wrath.
Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am languishing;
heal me, O Lord, for my body is in terror;
My soul, too, is utterly terrified;
but You, O Lord, how long . . . ?

Return, O Lord, save my life;
rescue me because of Your kindness,
For among the dead no one remembers You;
in the nether world who gives You thanks?
I am wearied with sighing;
every night I flood my bed with weeping;
I drench my couch with my tears.
My eyes are dimmed with sorrow;
they have aged because of all my foes.

Depart from me, all evildoers,
for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping;
The Lord has heard my plea;
the Lord has accepted my prayer.
All my enemies shall be put to shame in utter terror;
they shall fall back in sudden shame."

Cardinal Faulhaber called the first two stanzas "a little *Miserere*." Let us pray the psalm slowly. With a glance we see our whole past life, we see sin after sin. We look into the future, the eternal Judge stands before us. We kneel before Him and with deepest contrition pray: O God, I have deserved eternal punishment, but do not condemn me in Your wrath. Mercy! I am wretched, heal the wounds of my soul. My body and soul are shaken to the depths; act quickly — save me!

What can I adduce in my favor? First, I cannot appeal to Your justice, no, only to Your mercy! Secondly, if You reject me, I cannot praise You, in hell I must hate You while You want to be loved! (In this way the Jewish conception of death can be given a Christian turn.) Thirdly, see my deep sorrow of soul, my contrition. Verses 6-7 may be regarded as an act

of perfect contrition, "I drench my couch with my tears." A lovely passage!

Now the psalmist senses relief, anxiety of soul vanishes. "Depart from me, all evildoers!" God has pardoned me, He has seen my soul's sorrow. Begone, Satan, I will tolerate you no longer. Earnest purpose of amendment and confidence in forgiveness are the key sentiments in this final strophe.

EMBER SATURDAY

Station at St. Peter

The gleam of Easter light in the darkness of Lent

No longer are we able to sense fully the uplifting nature of the Ember day service in the ancient Church. After fasting the entire day the Christians would assemble at St. Peter's grave, spend the whole night in prayer, reading, and song, and celebrate the Eucharist early Sunday morning. At this service priests were ordained. The brightly lit church in the darkness of the night, the large number of assembled people, the clergy gathered in full strength around the Pope, the heavenly singing of the choir, the fragrant clouds of incense about Peter's grave — all this formed a solemn setting for the Ember liturgy.

Ember Saturday is the official thanksgiving day for benefits received during the past quarter year. It is likewise the day for renewing our covenant with God. St. Leo the Great (461) brought many of his Ember homilies to a conclusion with the words: "Let us fast on Wednesday and Friday, and celebrate the vigil on Saturday at the (grave of) the holy apostle Peter." On this day the same Pope Leo delivered a homily on the Gospel of the transfiguration. Therefore, the Church has been celebrating our Mass in the stational church of St. Peter for at least 1500 years.

2. Holy Mass (Intret). Originally today's Mass liturgy was oriented to the Christian community rather than to the catechumens, for the assembled faithful used the occasion to renew

their allegiance to God and to strengthen their bond with Him. Today they brought their special Lenten offerings (cf. the first lesson on tithes). The Mass, a preview of the Easter vigil, is one of the most inspiring in the missal. Its prayers help us to bridge the gap from the darkness of night to the radiant morning, from the night of awareness of sin to the sunlight brightness of supernatural life, from the night of Lent to Easter morning, from the night of earthly life to the glorious second coming of the transfigured Lord.

The *Introit* strikes the lowest note on our prayer harp, "I cry by day, I cry by night in Your presence." The psalmist is utterly dejected, abandoned, "Companion and neighbor You have taken away from me, my only friend is darkness." Pray the entire psalm, not a ray pierces its gloom.

The Lessons that follow show a beautiful progression. In the first two God speaks, draw-

The design portrays how the Mass is our guide through the darkness of night into the light of morning and Easter. Like the eagle carrying its young, God lifts us upwards toward the light (cf. the Canticle of Moses at Saturday Lauds). Below we see today's station church, the old basilica of St. Peter. *Ostende nobis lucem*, Show us the light (fourth lesson), is the drawing's theme and title.

ing us to Himself as the eagle lures its young sunwards. Our reply comes in the next two Readings, two fervent, heartfelt prayers. At the fifth Lesson dawn begins to gleam. A character sketch of the genuine Christian is had in the *Epistle*, and at the *Gospel* the Easter sun rises above the horizon in our transfigured Redeemer.

The first of the six Lessons offers an opportune occasion to renew our covenant with God, "Today I have chosen the Lord to be my God — today the Lord has chosen me to be His holy people!" This Lesson is very personal in tone. In the second Lesson God promises that if we are true to Him, we will be invincible, "Every place upon which your foot shall tread shall be yours." If only we were aware of our strength. Our sole enemy is sin. The second Oration has a beautiful request, viz., may we be humble in good fortune and undisturbed by misfortune.

The next two Lessons constitute the Church's answer to God's two promises. The third Lesson, a fervent oblation prayer offered by the community, shows why the Mass on Ember Saturday is called the great thank-offering for the past quarter year. The fourth Lesson is familiar to many because it occurs as a canticle every Saturday at Lauds; a desire for the spread of the Church, and longing for the parousia are its chief motifs, "Show us the light of Your mercies (throughout Lent to Easter); hasten the time and remember the end." (Night time and darkness in the ancient Church easily occasioned parousia themes.)

We are still celebrating the vigil, the "evening sacrifice" (*Gradual*). But the dawn is breaking, and the fourth Oration sounds like a bugle call for the coming day, "Inspire us with what to do, Lord . . ." The fifth Lesson with its hymn is another Lauds prayer. To the early Christians the three youths in the fiery furnace prefigured the resurrection; the time for the hour of Lauds has come, and a resurrection hymn is in place. Now the day itself is dawning; from Paul's letter to his favorite community the Church culls the sixth and final Lesson, "Rejoice always! Pray without ceasing! In all things

give thanks . . . and may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle ends with *Maranatha*, the Christian's cry of longing for Christ's second coming.

And now as the *Gospel* ends, see the sun is rising over the mountains, the Eucharistic Sun, the Easter Sun. A vision of Easter and parousia! Now the transfigured Lord is standing before the expectant congregation in His Easter rebirth — such is the meaning of the Gospel of the transfiguration.

The Gospel will become actual sacramentally on the altar. Both Easter and parousia are being pre-accomplished now. In our midst the apostle Peter is standing, with him we participate in the Lord's transfiguration; with him we say, "It is good for us to be here . . ." Peter experienced spiritual night on Mt. Olivet, and the radiance of the transfiguration on Tabor. Through the long night of repentance he watched with bitter tears, but he also experienced transfiguration by a martyr's death. May he pray that we will enjoy Easter spiritually transfigured while yet on earth and then in heaven.

At first glance it may seem disturbing that after this wonderful ascent to the heights of Tabor, Psalm 87 appears again with all its woes and pleading (*Off.*). There is a profound lesson underneath. The vision of the transfiguration was intended to prepare the three disciples for the passion. They should have followed Jesus not merely to Tabor, but also to Calvary. The experience on Tabor was only a momentary, brilliant flash. So it is with us also. At this point in the holy Sacrifice we must ascend the mountain of the Cross. The mood set by the Introit and Offertory is essential for our dying with Christ.

The *Secret*: may our present offerings and sacrifices sanctify our fasting so that what we do externally may be effective within our hearts. The *Communion*, a cry for judgment upon our enemies, foreshadows the passion. It is our call for help to Him whom we bear in our breasts, that He may save us from those who kill the spirit. The *Postcommunion* petitions for a

remedy against base passions, while the *Prayer over the People* pleads for strength and fidelity to God's holy will.

3. The Week's Framework. At first glance the Gospel of the transfiguration does not seem to fit the season. To prevent us from drawing hasty and false conclusions and supposing that the liturgy here contains an alien element, let us examine the thought sequence in the oldest Lenten Masses, i.e., those of the first Sunday of Lent, Ember Wednesday and Ember Saturday. These three days portray most clearly an aspect of the ideological method proper to the ancient Church.

1. *First Sunday of Lent*: Christ fasts forty days, is tempted, is served by angels.
2. *Ember Wednesday*: Moses on Mt. Sinai and Elias in the desert fast forty days; the former receives the Law, the latter reaches the mountain of God.
3. *Ember Saturday*: Christ, Moses, and Elias appear together on the mountain of transfiguration!

We can observe, moreover, a more subtle relation:

First Sunday: Christ says, "You shall serve God alone."

Ember Wednesday: "Whoever does the will of My Father, is My brother, sister, and mother."

Ember Saturday: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear Him."

What can we learn from this arrangement? At least four points:

a) Christ, Moses, and Elias fasted forty days.

b) This fasting prepares one for temptation (Christ), association with God (Moses), wandering in the desert (Elias).

c) A common factor is "serving God."

d) The goal is transfiguration.

Here, then, we have a theology of fasting. Fasting is one great means by which Christians can prepare themselves to meet the difficulties of life (and Christian life is indeed filled with temptations; it truly is a wandering in the desert, but

it also brings one in close association with God). Fasting equips us for God's service and leads us to our ultimate goal, transfiguration. The Lenten preface expresses these truths with classic beauty: "Through bodily fasting You suppress our passions, elevate our minds, give strength and merit."

THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

In ancient times the Sunday after Ember Saturday was aliturgical. At a later date when the Ember service was shifted to Saturday morning, a Sunday Mass was composed of texts from the preceding week (chants from Wednesday's Mass, Gospel from Saturday's). Accordingly, it would be misleading to take this Sunday's Mass as the guide or norm for the coming week. After the experience of Tabor during the Ember night, the Church leads us deeper into the theology of suffering. In the three oldest Masses of the coming week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) the theme of suffering is given special prominence. This corroborates our view concerning the transfiguration.

Main thoughts of the Masses during the coming week. Monday: Christ prepares for His suffering ("I go . . . When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man. . . ." Daniel, the mediator, a type of the Messiah). Wednesday: the Church (in the person of St. Cecilia) presents us Christ's "chalice to

The design. God is pronouncing judgment, *Dominus iudicat populos.* The tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew consonants for Yahweh) takes the place of Cross and royal insignia found on parousia thrones. As in Psalm 7, the punishments meted out are the misfortunes caused by the sword and burning arrow.

drink," while Esther (a type of Mother Church) intercedes in our behalf. Friday: the passion of Jesus is suggested by the Joseph story and the Gospel about the wicked vinedressers. The Tuesday liturgy features Christ as the teacher of self-abasement and humility. Thursday and Saturday are devoted to the penitents (Parables of Lazarus and the Prodigal Son).

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Station at St. Mary in Dominica

This is the will of God, your sanctification

Today's liturgy should be regarded as a summary or a kind of appendix to the Ember days. Mother Church wishes to give all those who were unable to participate in the celebration of the Ember days during the week a last opportunity to do so. Sunday, moreover, should provide further encouragement in our Lenten struggle. Showing us His and our goal of Easter transfiguration, Jesus invites us to imitate Him through suffering.

1. The Transfiguration. We have already seen how the Gospel of the transfiguration is a lesson on the Mass as well as a figure of the Mass. It teaches us the purpose of our

Lenten work. The mystical Christ now fasts forty days and thereby receives strength for a victorious onslaught against the devil. In all things the members follow the Head.

But the Gospels do not merely give instruction: they are spiritual dramas, i.e., they portray in symbol and express in sign what the holy Sacrifice effects in actuality. In the Mass drama Christ appears, the transfigured Christ who "sits at the right hand of the Father." To be sure we can see Him only with the eyes of faith. In the Mass drama Moses and Elias also have roles, for the Law and the prophets bear witness to the fact that the holy Sacrifice is the fulfillment of all they prefigured and prophesied. Moses and Elias speak of the Lord's death, an event that is being realized before our eyes. Like Peter we stand on the mystic mount of transfiguration and say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Nevertheless, we are not merely witnesses of the transfiguration, through holy Communion we are sharers in it. By means of the Eucharist we are helping to build the tabernacle, heaven's eternal temple, in which, with Christ, Moses, and Elias we shall dwell forever in unity and bliss.

2. Holy Mass (Reminiscere). Since the Mass is of a more recent origin the choice of the station church, St. Mary in Dominica, fell on one of the newer edifices. This church is one of the old Roman "deaconies," i.e., houses for the poor, at which in the course of time a church was always erected. Today, then, we make the stational pilgrimage in honor of the Mother of God, in whom the bright light of Christ's transfiguration is reflected perfectly. In its present form the Mass presents three lines of thought: a fervent *De Profundis* (from the Introit to the Collect), a voice from above which summons us upward (Epistle and Gospel), and a cheerful acceptance of this call (Offertory and Communion).

a) *De Profundis.* A strong sense of sin pervades the first section of the Mass formulary (Intr., Coll., Grad.). The *Introit* is a heartfelt appeal to a merciful God. The enemy of the human race controls our lower nature. On all sides there is trouble, we stand in greatest need of God's grace. The

prayers at the foot of the altar harmonize well with this fervent penitential prayer, especially the Confiteor which comes from the penitent's part in the ancient services. The pleading sentiments of the *Kyrie* also belong to this sphere of thought.

The *Collect* expresses similar petitions; we feel utterly helpless, but the consciousness of weakness is always a premise to conversion. So we ask God to shield us against a twofold attack, from within and from without; within the citadel of the heart the Ego attacks, and from without the world and the devil. Especially dangerous is the enemy in our very heart. To this chain of thought add the *Gradual* as the final link, "Agony has laid hold of my soul; deliver me from my troubles, Lord! Look upon my misery and my suffering, pardon all my sins."

b) In reply to our *De Profundis* comes a clear, strong voice from heaven in the Epistle and Gospel. The *Epistle* is from the beautiful letter to the Thessalonians. The community at Thessalonica was one of St. Paul's favorite congregations and his letter shows his special affection for them. But now it is Mother Church who speaks to us with the same loving spirit. She admonishes, she begs us to lead a life pleasing to God and to advance constantly in virtue and perfection. One sentence in particular should echo in our souls the whole week: "This is the will of God: your sanctification!"

Your personal holiness is the goal of redemption, the reason for the Church's existence, for baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation; yes, all the sacraments and the various means of grace were ordained to make you a saint. What is a saint? A saint is one who now possesses the grace of sonship, who shares the divine life of Christ, one who will some day pass from grace to glory. We became saints by baptism. We become ever more holy through the Eucharist. Holiness is primarily God's work; He alone can sanctify and preserve us. But we must also make smooth His ways. Two such ways are pointed by the Epistle: purity and justice. The soul that God desires to sanctify must live purely and chastely; impurity destroys holiness. But God also looks for justice and truth in our actions.

This program of reform which the Church lays before us occasions a twofold response. First a regret: Oh, why am I still so far from the ideal? Look, Lord, upon my misery and my suffering (*Grad.*). Then lifting ourselves up from the depths, we praise God, who gives us the grace of rising from sin and attaining to holiness. Therefore, in the *Tract*, we joyfully sing, "Happy are they who observe His commandment and exercise justice at all times." Of course we can attain holiness only through Him for whose coming at Easter we are longing, through Jesus Christ. On this account the Tract closes with, "Visit us with Your grace!" And God's answer follows in the *Gospel*. Yes, Christ here says to me: I shall lead you to holiness and transfiguration like that in which I Myself stand before you.

c) I cannot remain deaf to God's appeal from heaven. As the eagle entices its young into the sunlight, so the Church beckons us. What response can I give? Joyful assent. In the *Offertory* I bear to the altar my readiness to obey and my love for God's precepts, "I lift up my hands to Your commandments, I love them exceedingly."

From other Masses we are acquainted with the ideas expressed in the *Secret*, viz., may the gifts we bring increase our devotion and effect our salvation. In the holy Sacrifice the transfigured Christ appears, and in holy Communion He unites Himself with my soul, transfiguring it with the brilliant glory of His holiness. He is "my king and my God." The Eucharist gives me the power and grace to do my best to become transfigured, that is, to "serve God worthily by pleasing conduct" (*Postc.*).

3. Scripture Reading. During Lent the Breviary contains no Scripture lessons except on Sundays. In past times the books of Moses were read daily, with great devotion. Today the only Scripture lessons left are those on Sundays. In these readings the Church pursues a special goal; beginning on Septuagesima she presents one of the great patriarchs each Sunday: Adam (Septuagesima), Noe (Sexagesima), Abraham (Quinquagesima), Jacob (2nd Sunday of Lent).

Today Jacob occupies the stage. From the sacred Book we hear how Jacob, on the advice of his mother Rebecca, deceived his aged father Isaac by pretending to be the first-born and thus stole the birthright blessing from his brother Esau (Gen. 27:1-28). We will not quote the story here since it is so well known. But a short explanation is in place.

First we must distinguish between two things, God's plan and man's response. God had decided to make Jacob the ancestor of the Jewish people and of the Redeemer. By his unworthy life Esau forfeited the Messianic blessing. But the action whereby Jacob and Rebecca outwitted Isaac was reprehensible. God does not need man's wily ways to accomplish His plans for our salvation. He needs no lies. These faults brought much sorrow and grief to Jacob. By many trials God was purifying him, until at the end of his life he stands before us as a venerable old man, sanctified and proven in the fiery furnace of suffering. According to the fathers Jacob is a symbol of Christ, "The goatskins denote sin. When Jacob disguised his limbs with skins, he prefigured the One who bore not His own sins, but those of others."

4. Through the Day. The scene of the transfiguration will occupy our minds, if we are filled with a liturgical spirit, through the whole day. At Lauds, the sunrise Hour, we ascend the mountain as disciples, and behold our Lord and Master transfigured. The next three Hours are designed to retain this precious moment. They say with Peter: It is good for us to be here, let us build tabernacles. From Prime to Sext, therefore, we remain overawed by the vision of our transfigured Savior.

Remember that this is the usual time for the celebration of Mass, and each Mass means another hour of transfiguration. Not until sunset do we descend the Mount of Transfiguration and sing again yesterday's vesper antiphon, "Tell no one about the vision you have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (None and Vespers). Meditate on these mysterious words. Do they refer to the coming paschal feast? Does the liturgy mean to mark Sunday as an Easter day? Is the Sunday of the transfiguration an anticipation of the Lord's resurrection?

5. The Lenten Preface:

Through bodily fasting
You suppress vice,
elevate the mind,
bestow strength and merit.

Thus the Lenten preface which is sung daily at Mass from Ash Wednesday until Passion Sunday. These few words contain the whole wisdom of the Church on the value of fasting.

Let us continue the explanation with a parable. St. Paul once said, "What a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows in the flesh, from the flesh also he will reap corruption. But he who sows in the spirit, from the spirit he will reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). What does this parable mean? If the farmer plows, drags, and sows a field, if he cares for it in the best way possible, he will reap the harvest he desires. A good crop depends upon two things, the field and the seed. The farmer can reap only from the field he has sown; he can reap wheat only if he has sown wheat. All this is obvious.

Now we pass from the parable to its lesson. Man has two fields. St. Paul calls one the flesh, we may call it human nature; the other field he calls spirit, we may call it the soul or supernatural life. Now it is clear that the field which receives better care will produce the greater harvest. If a Christian devotes himself to good works, persevering prayer, the practice of virtues, and reception of the sacraments, he will reap a rich supernatural harvest.

Certain strains of plant life are affected by similar types with the result that the crop in one field affects the seed in a neighboring field. Again I will put it more concretely. If you plant the field of the flesh, that is, if you give yourself up to the luxuries of life and sinful enjoyments, then your harvest will consist of bad habits and evil passions; you will not be able to abandon such pleasures. Furthermore, the field of your soul will be so exhausted that it will lie fruitless and barren. To an even greater degree your soul will become in-

capable of raising itself to supernatural values. The reverse is also true; the virtuous person, the person who lives in the realm of the spirit, will lose his desire for sensual, earthly pleasures. The field of the flesh will lie fallow.

I would like to stress this opposition between spirit and flesh, a topic treated by our blessed Savior in the Parable of the Two Masters. One cannot serve two diametrically opposed leaders, or (to remain with our parable) one cannot attend adequately to two different fields. Generally the neglect or care bestowed on one is intimately related to the care or neglect given the other.

Now we understand the Lenten preface better. It too speaks of two fields, though it treats the field of the flesh more briefly than that of the soul or spirit.

The first point is that bodily fasting exercises a great influence upon the condition of these two fields. Fasting renders the field of the flesh sterile and barren, but makes the field of the soul fertile and fruitful. In brief this is the message of the Lenten preface, and the ultimate significance of fasting.

Let us look a little closer. We are told, "By bodily fasting You suppress vice." By vice (Latin *vitia*) we are to understand sins of sensual pleasure. Earthly pleasures are in league with each other, one spurs on and leads to another. This fact can be observed innumerable times in daily life. Many a youth has lost his innocence while drunk. The ancients said, "Bacchus (god of wine) and Venus (goddess of sensuality) are friends." On the other hand abstaining from and suppressing one desire often has the salutary effect of deadening other sensual desires. Thus it is with fasting. Withholding food and drink is a mighty weapon against the urges of the flesh, against the attacks of sensuality. From a strictly natural viewpoint, therefore, it is true that sensual passions are suppressed by fasting.

A number of applications would be in place. Temperance advocates have a very strong argument when they say: outlawing liquor means outlawing vice. How much sin and moral evil has its origin in immoderate indulgence in alcohol! The validity of this assertion cannot be questioned. The denial of

a pleasure normally allowable accustoms one to self-denial and gives the power to forego illicit pleasure. Without any qualification we may say that fasting (in the broadest sense, i.e., depriving oneself of some lawful pleasure) is the best training for chastity.

So far we have been speaking of the relationship between flesh and spirit; now let us change our approach and speak of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These realms are built upon the natural foundations of the spirit and the flesh. As by a flash of lightning Jesus' words take on new meaning, "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." How strong a weapon in our battle against hell is fasting! Divine truth has affirmed it. Now do we understand the first phrase in our Lenten preface!

The next phrases follow naturally. An old Latin proverb says, *Plenus venter non studet libenter* (it is hard to study on a full stomach). The ancient Romans knew how immoderate indulgence in food paralyzes the energy of the mind. The opposite, then, must also be true: it is easy to study under normal physical conditions. Let us now pass from the natural to the supernatural and consider the relationships between flesh and spirit. Abstinence from sensual pleasure gives the soul a boost. Bodily pleasures are like leaden weights holding the soul to the earth; if these disappear, if these are removed, the soul rises, like a balloon, to celestial heights. Now we see what great significance moderation, chastity, and virginity have for the kingdom of God. Fasting, then, elevates the mind and bestows upon the soul the power to practice virtue and become holy. And finally it helps us attain the crown of eternal glory.

Thus fasting is a powerful aid in living and developing a Christian life. It supports us in the battle with our lower nature, it offers us ways of ascending to God, it empowers us to practice virtue and promises us eternal reward. Now it is clear why this season, which is devoted to spiritual renewal, must be hallowed by fasting.

A final thought. In the Gospel last Sunday we saw Jesus struggling with the devil after His fast; today we see Him

transfigured. Do not these two Gospels give the finest background for our preface? "Through bodily fasting You suppress vice (temptation), elevate the mind, bestow strength and merit (transfiguration)!"

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Clement

I go . . .

The discerning eye will quickly recognize the new motif in today's liturgy. We cannot, it is true, discover any systematic development in the Lenten Masses, their origin is too heterogeneous. But there is an underlying, forward-moving progression. The first four days of Lent form a group by themselves and outline a Lenten program that will be pleasing to God. The first week of Lent likewise forms a unit with a dominant theme: Christ, Moses, and Elias teach how a forty day fast serves as a weapon against the devil and prepares the way for Easter transfiguration.

With today's Mass, the theme of *suffering* comes into prominence, our Lord is preparing for death. The Gospel announces His passion, while other portions of the formulary (Lesson and Offertory) show Him as Mediator and Redeemer. The mood of the Mass today (and to some extent for the rest of the week) is: keep close to the Cross in obedience and humility.

1. Holy Mass (Redime me). The stational saint, Pope Clement, was the third successor to St. Peter in the episcopal chair of Rome. Highly esteemed as pope (90 to 101), he died a martyr's death while exiled on the Crimean peninsula. The basilica dedicated to his memory dates from the fourth century. According to tradition Clement assembled the Christians in this house already before Nero's persecution. His Church, then, is one of Rome's oldest Christian sanctuaries. The saint's remains were brought to Rome by Cyril and Methodius, apostles to the Slavs, and interred in this station church. At St. Clement's we find

the furnishings as prescribed for the celebration of the stational service in the last days of antiquity in a state of complete preservation.

The *Introit* is a pilgrim's song, "My foot stands on the straight road . . . I walk upon it in innocence." Are these words put upon the lips of the catechumens who beg for redemption and are happy to have found the right road thereto? Or do they come from the lips of the stational saint, since we are standing in his house? The *Collect* is one of the typical Lenten prayers which makes bodily fasting a symbol of "fasting from sin."

The *Lesson*, a very gripping plea to God, was composed by the prophet Daniel while in exile. Daniel prefigured Christ who took upon Himself the sins of mankind, atoned for them, suffered for them, and interceded for His city and people. Jerusalem in ruins typifies the Church in her Lenten humiliation. "For our sins Jerusalem is in disgrace." The Church thinks primarily of the penitents who indeed were led out of Egypt (baptized) but are now in exile (excommunicated). The whole Lesson is an excellent penance prayer. It is the Church's intention to purify herself, to rebuild anew destroyed soul temples. "Make Your face shine over Your sanctuary." Like Daniel's prayer every Mass is an effective plea for redemption. "Do not delay!," the Church prays; and we repeat, "Do not delay!" (*Gradual*).

The scene shifts to Christ's battle against the darkness at the *Gospel*. The Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth) was near, and waves of hatred were already rising against Jesus. He predicted His own death, "I go hence." He clearly saw the huge chasm between the Church and the world, "You are from below, I am from above." He proclaimed eternal death as the lot of those who rejected Him. The concluding sentence is particularly beautiful, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He," i.e., God.

Look up to Christ exalted on the Cross, you will learn to know Him best in His suffering. (At this point the eyes of

the assembled faithful probably turned to the splendid cross in the apse of St. Clement's.) Then with words which seem to echo from the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus concludes, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, because I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." Obedience is likewise *my* road to transfiguration.

Christ's last words in the Gospel continue to ring in our ears at the *Offertory*; therefore as we approach the altar we see the mystic Calvary, "I look upon the Lord constantly, He stands at my right hand so that I do not stumble." No, He will not leave me alone, as I go forth into the battle of Lent. At the *Communion* we chant the song of God's condescending love in becoming man, and man's exaltation to divine heights (Ps. 8). How meaningful this psalm is at Communion time. The short and simple *Secret* and *Postcommunion* are important dogmatically; the former calls the Mass a "sacrifice of atonement and praise," the latter singles out the purifying and healing powers of the holy Eucharist.

Carrying our cross obediently, humbly, let us extract from the Mass formulary whatever is related to this theme.

a) In spirit we are standing at the station of the holy Pope Clement who was put to death in exile. Through his martyrdom he bore Christ's wounds in his body; he is, therefore, well qualified to initiate us into suffering with Christ. The mosaic in the apse of St. Clement's Church pictures the Cross as the tree of life; upon it are twelve doves seeking protection, i.e., the twelve apostles who represent the Church. *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross!*

b) Daniel is a figure of our suffering Savior. Although wholly free of sin, Christ assumed the guilt of mankind. Every Mass is an intercession prayer by the divine Daniel, Christ, for the Church, the new Jerusalem. Daniel is also a type of every individual Christian now doing penance for sin.This is true Christian fellowship, when one takes upon himself the guilt of others and makes atonement. We do not wish to appear holy, like the Pharisees, and then cast stones at others; we

want to observe Lent after the spirit of Christ, after the spirit shown by Daniel in his prayer. Such a spirit is a sure sign that one is humbly carrying his cross.

c) The Gospel, a somewhat difficult one, is filled with references to suffering. Christ is at odds with the Jews; or rather, the mystic Christ is beginning the battle against hell and the world. Here too His words apply, "You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world." This kind of exclusiveness is, indeed, one of our goals during the present season of spiritual renewal. The Church, Christ on earth, must separate herself from everything worldly, "from below."

The last two sentences are worthy of special consideration. Christ's exaltation by His death on the Cross is for us the greatest proof of His divinity. It is also the highest manifestation of His humility and obedience. The Cross becomes our textbook. Let us study well this lesson on redemption; it will acquaint us with Christ and with ourselves. Frequently during the day let us repeat these words, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, because I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." Christ spoke these words that we may repeat them. Humility and obedience are the two chief ways of following the Cross to transfiguration, the transfiguration of Easter.

As the day is ending we sing at the *Magnificat*, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, because I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." Could I but speak these words with *my* lips sincerely! The verse can be used as an ejaculation.

3. Psalm 8. Man is like unto God, He is a King.

2 "O Lord, our Lord
how glorious is Your name over all the earth!

You have exalted Your majesty above the heavens.

3 Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings
You have fashioned praise because of Your foes,
to silence the hostile and the vengeful.

4 When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars which You set in place—
5 What is man that You should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that You should care for him?

6 You have made him little less than the angels (*elohim*),
and crowned him with glory and honor.
7 You have given him rule over the works of Your hands,
putting all things under his feet:
8 All sheep and oxen,
yes, and the beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

10 O, Lord, our Lord,
how glorious is Your name over all the earth!"

Content outline.

Introduction: the greatness of God (v. 2 used as an antiphon)

I. 1. God's glory in nature —the night sky (vv. 2-4)
2. God's interest in man (v. 5)

II. Man raised
1. to a divine dignity (v. 6)
2. to kingship over creation (vv. 7-9)

Finale: the greatness of God (v. 10 the antiphon repeated)

Faulhaber's summary. The name of God shines wonderfully upon the child's brow, in the stars of the sky, and on the brow of man who is king of creation.

Psalm 8 is a song of gratitude to God, the exalted creator, for having favored man so highly and for granting him kingship over creation. Notice that the Hebrew version of verse 6 reads, "You have made him little less *than God*" (in the Vulgate, "than the angels"). This brings to mind a far more profound truth: supernaturally man is raised to divine heights,

and the poet explains this union with God by stressing his kingship over all creatures. In simplest language the psalm propounds lofty doctrine.

TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Balbina

One is your Father, who is in heaven; one is your teacher, Christ; you are all brothers!

Today's Mass is neither a catechumens' Mass nor a penitents' Mass. It comes from the period when the catechumenate was no longer in existence but before the time when the penitential character of Lent had become predominant—the age of flourishing, community liturgical life under Gregory the First, about 600. The prayers, therefore, are addressed to the faithful who wish to purify and perfect themselves.

To understand the Mass more easily, picture to yourself an ancient Roman apse mosaic (cf. e.g., illustration above). In the middle a majestic Christ is seated on a throne holding a roll of parchment in His hand ("One is your teacher"); above Him God's hand ("One is your Father"); below a ring of sheep hurrying to the Good Shepherd ("You are all brothers"). Next to the Redeemer stands the stational saint, Balbina, a wise

virgin with oil-filled lamp in hand. This picture may have influenced the Mass text. Originally dedicated to the divine Redeemer, the stational church was later given the name of its foundress, St. Balbina.

1. **Stational Theme.** On March 31 the Martyrology gives the following information on our saint: "At Rome, the saintly maiden Balbina. She was the daughter of the holy martyr Quirinus and had received baptism from the hand of Pope St. Alexander. After her death she was buried next to her father on the Appian Way." St. Balbina was one of those charitable virgins of the ancient Church who passed their time in loving service to others; perhaps she was a deaconess. She visited the Christians detained in prison, cared for churches and their priests, supported the poor, nursed the sick.

The stational basilica, once a temple, actually is a well-preserved Roman hall. In an old alabaster urn under the free-standing high altar are preserved the relics of the saint and those of her father, St. Quirinus. To this sanctuary the Western Church today directs a pilgrimage and celebrates Mass. The liturgy has erected a memorial to the widow of Sarephta in the person and church of our stational saint.

2. **Holy Mass (Tibi dixit).** The *Introit* is a lovely entrance prayer. With fervent longing the procession of Christians approaches the sanctuary where they behold the shining countenance of their Master. "I seek Your face . . . (the faithful); the Lord is my light (catechumens); do not turn Your face from me (penitents)." The goal of our efforts is Easter. How beautifully this is expressed in the Introit psalm, "One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek: to dwell in the house of God all the days of my life, that I may taste the sweetness of God and visit His sanctuary!" How fervently penitent and catechumen prayed this psalm!

The *Collect* teaches that knowledge of and compliance with God's will depend upon divine grace. Today the *Lesson* is not a penitential sermon, but an instructive story. The widow of Sarephta, a lovable woman, listens to the prophet's words, si-

lences her mother love, and shares her meal with a stranger. From her example of obedience to faith we learn what blessings almsgiving brings; your cruse of oil or store of flour will never diminish while you supply another's wants.

The Lesson seeks to impress two basic Lenten virtues, almsgiving and love of neighbor. In this widow, as noted above, the stational saint is prefigured. Yes, we can go further. The widow and Balbina are figures of a third noble woman, Mother Church, who never hoards the oil of grace or the wheaten meal of the Eucharist.

The *Gradual* refers expressly to the Lesson; since the example of the widow showed how God provides, do not be anxious. God will not abandon you; He will "feed" you (with both earthly and heavenly bread). The *Gospel* has no associations with the Lesson. Again we see Christ in His battle with darkness (theme of suffering). The passage is from His famous final discourse against the Pharisees shortly before His death; in it He denounced the Pharisees for their vanity and conceit, their hypocrisy and their teachings. Against this dark background He then proposed a plan of action for His own disciples. They should be servants to all, they should be humble and embrace everyone with brotherly love, they should look up in childlike devotion to their heavenly Father and see in Christ their master and teacher. In another form we have yesterday's lesson on imitating Christ in obedience and humility.

Impressed by the Lord's grave words, we bring to the altar at the *Offertory* not material offerings, but crushed and humbled hearts; rarely does the theme of penance (Ps. 50) break through so powerfully in an Offertory. The *Secret* teaches us the effect of the holy mystery: it will make us holy, cleanse us of all earthly faults, and conduct us to heavenly blessings. At the *Communion* we are sincerely grateful for the victory of redemption; then we beg to "keep God's commandments" faithfully (*Postc.*).

Compare the Introit with the Communion. What we asked for and desired in the former, is granted in the latter as we

come face to face with Christ. In the Collect and Postcommunion we beg for the grace needed to carry out the "Teacher's" commands. For the catechumens too there is encouragement and joy as they see the finest and most heroic patterns of faith in the world of the Gentiles, viz., the widow of Sarephta, the Canaanite woman, the Roman officer!

3. Meditation. One is your Father, who is in heaven; one is your teacher, Christ; you are all brothers!

In these words lies embedded the basic structure of Christian common life. The Christian ideal, life with the Church, is emphasized. a) First, the *Fatherhood of God*. God is the head of the family. For the early Christians it was a new and thrilling experience to be able to address God as *Abba*, Father. Down to the present time this approach to God is peculiarly Christian. There is here no juridical balance between accomplishment and merit, but a predominance of grace and love. Perhaps we have grown too accustomed to this unique privilege to be duly impressed. God is our Father, we His children. To be a child of God is to have high rank through grace; this is our nobility. Lent should deepen this Father-child relationship, should increase our confidence in God's fatherly goodness and care, should deepen our spirit of obedience and childlike reverence.

b) *Christ* is our teacher and master. We are called Christians, but do we always act so as to deserve the name? Do we give constant attention to maintaining our Christian dignity? Are we humble enough to learn from Christ, as willing pupils? His message comes to us most clearly in the Gospel. A good student would never tire of examining the Gospel and following in his master's footsteps. Christ speaks to us also through His priests, in the Church. Let us hold fast His doctrine, and esteem His commands, especially His principal commandment, love. No longer I, but Christ lives in me!

c) We are all *brothers!* We are God's great family, bound by a strong, common bond. *Community* is the word we have rediscovered—*community* in prayer, in sacrifice, in common

action. We must make this truth operative in every group of which we are part, e.g., family, business, factory, parish, state! But what special significance this truth assumes at divine services, at holy Mass! There we are grouped around our teacher, Christ. We are His members, and He leads us to the Father. Yes, in the Sacrifice of the Mass all three are together: Father, teacher, and brothers.

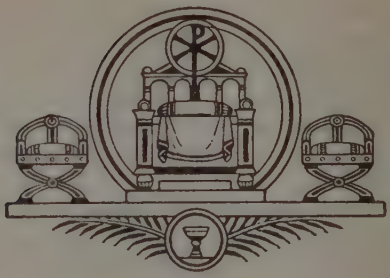
4. Psalm 9. Christ, the Conqueror. Psalm 9 consists of two distinct songs, one of thanksgiving and victory, the other of lament and pleading. (The two compositions are frequently listed separately.) The Communion of the Mass shows that only the first part receives consideration today. Because of its length we cannot quote the entire psalm. Surely every reader has easy access to an edition of the Psalter.

Content outline.

Introduction: gratitude to God (vv. 2-3)

1. God defeats our enemies (vv. 4-7)
   a) God as conqueror (v. 4)
   b) as judge (v. 5)
   c) as destroyer (vv. 6-7)
2. God protects His own (vv. 8-11)
   a) He is our counsellor (vv. 8-9)
   b) and the protector of the weak (vv. 10-11)
3. Praise Yahweh who always helps the oppressed (vv. 12-15)
4. and punishes wicked people (vv. 16-21)

Liturgical application. As Christian worshipers we lift this psalm from its historical setting and make it a prayer of thanksgiving for help and victory in God's kingdom. The psalmist's triumph was indeed only one phase of God's great battle and victory over all His enemies. So we may take "battle" and "victory" in their broadest meaning; the battlefield is the whole wide world, every human heart in fact, and the contest continues to the end of time. The winner is always Jesus Christ —in the world, in the Church, and in the soul.



WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Cecilia

The Church leads us to penance, to baptism, and to Christ's chalice of suffering.

As frequently in previous Masses, we can again today distinguish two areas of thought, that of the *station* and that of *suffering*.

The Mass formulary, composed primarily for the catechumens, clearly indicates their goal and the work entailed to attain it; but the penitents are not overlooked. The place of suffering in Christian life receives special stress while the station and its theme retains a privileged position. Thus in this lovely Mass all the Lenten motifs are harmoniously united.

1. **Stational Theme.** The station is at St. Cecilia, and this fact furnishes the key for understanding the Mass. The saint, martyred about 250, is one of the highly honored virgin martyrs of the ancient Church. In Rome two places are consecrated to her honor, viz., her former grave in the papal crypt of the catacomb of St. Callistus and her titular church in Trastevere. In this basilica, where her blessed body now rests, the Roman Church celebrates today's stational service. From the year 545

The picture reminds us of the Gospel in which Salome petitions high positions for her sons in Jesus' kingdom. The heavenly seats are ready, but high places in the kingdom of heaven are given only to those who participate in the Lord's chalice of suffering through martyrdom (palm).

Enlighten, Lord,
our hearts and our
minds so that
we may attain to
eternal life and light✚

we have a document witnessing to a stational observance at this church. When the imperial official Anthemus was sent from Constantinople to take Pope Vigilius a prisoner, "he found the pontiff in the church of St. Cecilia on November 22, for it was her feast day" (*Liber Pont.*).

Reverently we proceed to the day's station. In the crypt the saint's body lies in a sarcophagus. In 1599 the titular Cardinal, Paul Sfondrati, directed investigations for locating the body. A cypress coffin contained the holy remains; the body lay uncorrupted in a position in which she might have breathed her last—her knees flexed a little, her arms stretched out along the body, her face turned to the ground. Stephano Maderna, who often saw the holy relics, was the artist of the famous, lifelike statue that now reposes before the main altar. Also in this church rest the bodies of the two brothers Tiburtius and Valerian whom Cecilia led to baptism and martyrdom.

The (legendary) Acts of St. Cecilia contain a story which is important for understanding the Mass. Cecilia had taken the vow of virginity. A youth named Valerian hoped to marry her, and the wedding was arranged against her will. On their first night together she confided this secret to Valerian, "An angel of God is my protector, who jealously guards my virginity." Valerian assured her that if he could see the angel he would believe in Christ. After Cecilia replied that without baptism this was impossible, he consented to embrace the faith. Joyfully the saint sent him to Pope Urban, hidden in the catacombs. In gratitude the Pope prostrated himself when he heard that "the good seed, Cecilia, was bearing rich fruit." Then he baptized Valerian.

Upon his return the youth "found Cecilia in her room absorbed in prayer and beside her stood an angel. When Valerian saw him, he was filled with fear." Then the angel gave Cecilia and her lover a wreath of fire-red roses and snow-white lilies from paradise as a reward for their love of chastity. Valerian responded with a wish which the angel promised to fulfill; he begged for the conversion of his brother Tiburtius. When the latter came to congratulate the bridal pair, he was surprised at

the extraordinary fragrance of the roses and lilies. After discovering the reason, he too asked for the waters of baptism. Soon a report of the conversions reached the prefect who ordered the two brothers' arrest and execution if they refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Thus our stational saint led Tiburtius and Valerian to baptism and martyrdom.

Cecilia is a figure of holy Church, who is now leading her children to the sacrament of initiation and to suffering in Christ. By the two women, Esther and Salome, this message is presented in another way, very beautifully, in the two Lessons.

2. Holy Mass (Ne derelinquas) begins with a piercing cry which almost equals the laments of the agonizing Savior in Passiontide. It is a cry which may be placed on the lips of the suffering Christ or of the sin-laden Church. Either interpretation has a good basis, for in the Lesson the Church laments over her sins, and in the Gospel we see Christ setting out upon His road of suffering.

The *Collect*, a typical Lenten prayer, connects bodily fasting with fasting from sin. From the Book of Esther the *Lesson* quotes a prayer by Mardochai (in the old missals it was ascribed to Esther). A pogrom had been plotted against the Jewish people in Persia. Mardochai, a figure of Christ (like Daniel last Monday), begged God to deliver the nation; or if we take the old version, Queen Esther, a type of the Church (Cecilia), beseeches God to be merciful to her people, to penitents, and to us in our fasting and humiliation: "Do not despise Your chosen people whom You delivered from Egypt . . . change our sorrow of fasting into (Easter) jubilation; then we will live (spiritually) and praise Your name, O Lord."

We are in the midst of the great struggle over souls, souls that now must be rescued from the devil. It is not merely a struggle between individuals, rather it is a total war between the kingdom of God and the powers of hell. The mystical Christ is undergoing the humiliation of fasting, striving after the grace to vitalize every member. In this way the *Gradual* too must be understood.

The *Gospel* ranks among the very finest in Lent. The event

described took place about a week before our Lord's death. On the road Jesus prophesied His passion for the third time (the theme of suffering resounds strongly through the whole Gospel). Then, according to the account, Salome approached and requested important posts in the kingdom of heaven for her two sons. Jesus replied by promising them instead "a chalice of suffering," and took the occasion to preach a moving sermon on humility: "Nor is the Son of Man come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom price for many." Our blessed Lord fulfills these words in the holy Sacrifice every day.

The liturgy focuses attention upon Salome, for she typifies the Church and St. Cecilia. (Here again we can observe how the liturgy uses passages from Scripture. The Church overlooks the rather dishonorable role played by the mother of the two apostles, overlooks altogether her thoughtless plea and ambitious plans, and sees only a woman who leads two brothers to the Savior. And He meets the request by promising them "a chalice of suffering." This climax to the story is the liturgy's main consideration. One easily thinks of St. Cecilia, who brought two brothers to Christ, to baptism, and to the chalice of the Lord. More forcefully still it brings to our minds the Church, mother and virgin, who now leads her children to baptism, to penance, and to the chalice of Lenten mortification.)

The *Offertory* chant is imbued with strong confidence in God, but like the other chants presupposes opposition and suffering. The *Secret* begs for deliverance from the bonds of sin. In harmony with the sung parts of the Mass the *Communion* (Ps. 10) manifests absolute trust in God during the battle against the enemy. In the *Postcommunion* we express our desire "to increase within us the fruits of eternal redemption." The *Prayer over the People* will be treated in more detail below.

That the Church today underlines heavily the theme of suffering, we can see from the antiphons at sunrise and sunset: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (Ben. Ant.). "He will be delivered

to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified!" (Magn. Ant.). It is, therefore, the wish of the Church that we spend the entire day with Jesus journeying onward to His sacred passion. Note the unusual emphasis upon suffering without any reference to the resurrection!

3. The Prayer over the People. The final prayer of this Mass merits special attention. It combines a brief biography of St. Cecilia with an outline of Christian moral ideals. The prayer runs: "O God, You are the restorer and lover of innocence. Direct toward Yourself the hearts of Your faithful servants that, inflamed by the fire of Your spirit, they may be constant in faith and vigorous in action."

Raphael's famous painting of St. Cecilia illustrates this prayer. St. Cecilia is portrayed as virgin, martyr, and patron of music. Behind the saint stand four persons, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine, St. John the Apostle, and St. Paul. The first two are models of innocence regained, the last two of innocence preserved. All four were remarkable for constancy in faith and vigor in action, virtues which we are striving to gain and augment during Lent.

Innocence is of prime importance; if we have been so unfortunate as to lose it, now during Lent is the time to regain it. For at Easter we all must appear brilliant with the light of baptismal innocence. Baptismal innocence in the sense of the ancient Church is freedom from mortal sin. The symbol and crown of baptismal innocence is virginity, an example of which we see today in St. Cecilia! Baptismal innocence has two companion virtues: strong, active love of neighbor and persevering fidelity to the faith. With what splendor these virtues shine in the life of our stational saint! Let us give them special attention during Lent.

The Church has already shown us several times that love is the goal of our Lenten efforts (e.g., on Quinquagesima Sunday and Monday, on the first Sunday of Lent, and, lastly, yesterday). Would I dare to accompany Christ to Jerusalem today in a state of enmity and sin? And when I see how joyfully

Cecilia and her two godchildren die for the faith, should I not at least try to *live* faithful to Christ?

4. Psalm 10. Firmly Rooted in God. This psalm, sung by David while on flight, is typical of the songs which manifest the psalmist's unswerving confidence in God. Three easily distinguishable points give a basis for dividing the song into as many strophes: 1. advice from fainthearted friends (vv. 1-3); 2. the psalmist's unshakable trust in God (vv. 4-5); 3. final victory, for God is just (vv. 6-7).

1 "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to me,
'Flee to the mountain like a bird!
2 For, see, the wicked bend the bow;
they place the arrow on the string
to shoot in the dark at the upright of heart.
3 When the pillars are overthrown,
what can the just man do?'
4 The Lord is in His holy temple;
the Lord's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold,
His searching glance is on mankind.
5 The Lord searches the just and the wicked;
the lover of violence He hates.
6 He rains upon the wicked fiery coals and brimstone;
a burning blast is their allotted cup.
7 For the Lord is just, He loves just deeds;
the upright shall see His face."

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Mary across the Tiber

The rich man who refused crumbs to Lazarus begs for a drop of water!

The Thursdays of Lent are penance days, with Masses highly penitential in tone. A grave and earnest spirit pervades the Les-

sons. The underlying theme in today's Mass is clear and unmistakable. The Church shows us the two roads, the road of life and the road of death; this is a motif that goes back to the oldest patristic literature.

1. **The Penance Theme.** In composition the Thursday Masses are markedly good. On the first Thursday of Lent the penitents were represented in the person of the centurion of Capharnaum, who did not even venture to come into the Savior's presence, "O Lord, I am not worthy!" On the second Thursday the penitents came in the person of the Canaanite woman whom Jesus compared to dogs, whereas the children sit at table. Today the penitents are likened to wretched Lazarus, covered with the leprosy of sin, sitting at the rich man's door and desiring to eat the crumbs from his table. All three are striking figures of penitent souls; all three likewise point to the Eucharist in various ways.

Let us imagine ourselves in the ancient Church. We see a group of penitents, clad in their hair shirts, kneeling in remorse and self-abasement. They are allowed to remain until the Gospel. Then they are sent away; they may not share in the Father's table. At the gate of the church they beg for a drop of water to cool their tongues. In this manner we can apply the parable of the rich sybarite and the miserable Lazarus. There is another side to the story, the poor man's lot after death, for the Church wishes to show us heaven and hell after death as well as heaven and hell on earth. The same holds for the Lesson.

Heaven and hell after death. Lazarus in Abraham's bosom is a figure of heaven, while the sybarite tormented by a parched tongue and longing for cool water represents the misery of hell. The same idea underlies the figure of the withered tree of the desert referred to in the Lesson.

Heaven and hell on earth. To be a child of God, alive in the bosom of holy Church, comforted and refreshed by the mysteries of the holy sacraments is heaven on earth. It makes no difference if our outward life is as miserable as that of the beggar Lazarus. Hell on earth consists in being an outcast from

the Church, cut off from the sources of divine life. Such a soul is already tormented by thirst like the sybarite's, is already like a withered desert tree. The penitents know how miserable this state can be.

The antiphons at the beginning and at the end of the day, "Remember, son, that you received good things in your lifetime, while Lazarus was smitten by misfortunes" (Ben. Ant.). "That rich man begged for a drop of water—he who had kept from Lazarus the crumbs" (Magn. Ant.).

Within your own mind dramatize the parable. Note how the liturgy directs attention to the rich man. In the morning feel as if you were the sybarite deep in hell, hearing the gently reproachful words of Christ coming from a distance. In the evening reflect upon the rich man's lack of love and charity, and his grievous punishment. The passage contains a striking antithesis, as Pope St. Gregory already pointed out in his famous *Liber Moralium* (I Mor. I, 18 c. 19 and 30).

2. Stational Theme. The place of the station, St. Mary in Trastevere, is located in the large Jewish quarter of ancient Rome. This circumstance occasioned the choice of the Gospel; in the ancient Church the Jews were often depicted as rich sybarites, whereas Lazarus symbolized the Church, whose members belonged to the lowest social classes. This mentality underlies St. Gregory's explanation in today's homily, "Dear brethren, whom could this rich man, clothed in silk and purple, represent but Jews who cultivated the externals of earthly life? And who is meant by Lazarus, all covered with sores, but the people of the Gentiles?" The open sores, the saint continues, symbolize confession of sins: "If we confess our sins, what do we do but uncover the evil that was concealed in us?"

3. Holy Mass (Deus in adjutorium). The *Introit*, Psalm 69, is still used at the end of the Litany of the Saints. In ancient times it served as a fitting conclusion to the stational procession and as an excellent transition prayer from the sinful world to God's sanctuary. In the spirit of poor Lazarus we stand before the door leading to the one truly rich man: Christ. The *Collect* with its petition that we may overcome the enemies of

soul and body through prayer and fasting was prompted by our Lord's words, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer and fasting."

There is intentional parallelism between the two Lessons, both draw a clear line between good men and wicked men. Jeremias rises first to address us, "Cursed be the wicked man, who puts his trust in the world; he is like the withered tree of the desert. Blessed is the good man; he is like the green tree planted by the stream."

Both Scripture and liturgy love to use the tree as a figure. Ancient mosaics employ the olive and palm as symbols for the children of God; the liturgical texts often compare the just man to the olive, palm, or cedar. The prophet laments over man's perverted, treacherous ways. But there is One who sees deeply into the heart and reins, One who knows perfectly even man's subconscious tendencies. Hearing this message the faithful cry, "Mercy, God!" (*Grad.*).

The *Gospel* teaches the same lesson in the splendid Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Three points, at least, should stand out prominently: 1. the proper evaluation of earthly happiness and unhappiness. For some persons, happiness is a dangerous precipice, for others unhappiness. It should now be absolutely clear to me that a life filled with earthly joy and riches and pleasure, no matter how long or intense, is but a false happiness if an eternal hell follows; a life of great penury, suffering, illness and contempt is a happy one if it leads to eternal bliss. The two classes of people who need the assistance of faith most are the wealthy and the very needy, "Give me neither riches nor poverty, supply merely my needs. . . ." Try to imitate the first Christians! Their thoughts were centered in heaven; they were strangers to earth, journeying to a celestial home. Martyrdom was desired as the final sacrifice in lives rich in self-denial!

2. One who refuses the usual means which religion offers need not rely upon a death-bed conversion. God will work no miracles for him, "If they do not hearken to the Church, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead."

3. There *is* a hell, and it exists for everyone—for you and for me. A dreadful truth! Christ does not wish to frighten, but to warn. At this point in the Mass service, the penitents were dismissed. They knew that death or life lay before them; their choice was life and they would walk the road of penance and conversion to obtain it!

The faithful, who remain for the sacrifice banquet, hear a consoling and encouraging story at the *Offertory*. Moses prays for his faithless people and God is appeased; this is about to become a reality again. For God always is appeased by the offering of His Son's Sacrifice. Christ is the new Moses who pleads for all sinners as He offers His death to the Father. In the Blood of Christ our garments are cleansed for the celebration of Easter.

And as the faithful approach the altar a second time they think of the Bread from heaven. (Today is Thursday, the day when the holy Eucharist was instituted.) Though they resemble poor Lazarus, "I am needy and poor" (Ps. 69), they are rich and strong, for they are united with Christ who says: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him" (*Comm.*). Through Him you can become a fruitful tree, you can attain the goal of Lazarus. The *Prayer over the People* is a fine Lenten prayer: May God, the creator and ruler, enliven the faith and virtue that has hitherto been won with such difficulty; and may He preserve that which He has thus enlivened. Our Lenten efforts at conversion must bear permanent fruit.

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Vitalis

The Cross veiled in figures

Today is a good example of a fast day in fulfillment of Christ's words, "When the Bridegroom is taken away, they shall fast." Throughout the day our thoughts center upon the

Bridegroom's death. For both the chants and Lessons the Mass uses passion texts, perhaps the only instance of this during Lent. Even the Office antiphons reflect the theme of Christ's suffering. "He will utterly destroy those evil men, and will let out the vineyard to other vine-dressers, who will render to Him the fruits in their seasons" (Ben. Ant.). "They tried to take Him prisoner, but they feared the people, who regarded Him as a prophet" (Magn. Ant.). Throughout the day we will accept our share of the guilt borne by the Jews for having killed the Messiah sent to save a chosen people.

1. A Liturgical Way of the Cross. A favorite modern devotion during Lent is the Way of the Cross, meditations at fourteen stations commemorating Christ's historical journey to Calvary. In today's Mass the liturgy shows us another "Way of the Cross," one with only four stations. Let us make the necessary reflections.

First Station. The setting and inspiration of the Mass is the stational church of St. Vitalis. Of St. Vitalis, who today exemplifies the Cross and suffering, the Martyrology on April 28 says, "At Ravenna (in northern Italy) the death of the holy martyr Vitalis. He was the father of Sts. Gervase and Protase. Because he had secretly taken the body of the blessed Ursicinus to his house and buried it with fitting reverence, Paulinus, a former consul, had him arrested, tortured, and thrown into a deep pit, which then was filled with stones and dirt. By such martyrdom he was united to Christ."

The saint suffered about the year 70; in the fifth century a church was dedicated to him and his two sons Sts. Gervase and Protase. It is the most recent of the twenty-five titular churches that have influenced the formation of the Roman liturgy. In this station, which has undergone many architectural changes in the course of centuries, three pictures have bearing upon the Mass text. A representation of the crucifixion scene is on the arch of the apse, while the vestibule of the choir contains two great frescoes picturing the martyrdom of St. Vitalis (one shows the saint being cast into the pit). Christians of the Roman rite come to this venerable church today for the cele-

bration of Mass. This fact is important liturgically, for by his martyrdom St. Vitalis becomes for us a figure and model of Christ's death on the Cross.

The Second Station is a scene from the Old Testament. As if in the early light of dawn we see the Cross—in the story of Joseph, the favorite of his father, sent to his brothers tending the flocks, hated by them and cast into a pit, later sold for a few silver coins, and finally exalted as the savior of his people. It is Jesus who is meant. Jesus, the Son, in whom the Father was "well pleased," was sent to men and became their brother. Yet He was hated, sold for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed to the Gentiles, killed. However, He too redeemed His brothers, and saved them from eternal death.

Third Station. The message hid in the Epistle is repeated in parable form in the Gospel. The struggle is nearing its climax, in a few days Jesus will be led to Calvary. With full realization of the whole tragic drama He tells the parable of the wicked husbandmen and thereby clearly outlines the history of Jewish resistance to God's work of redemption.

The vineyard is the house of Israel. What care God, the father and owner of this vineyard, tendered upon His favorite holding! The husbandmen to whom He entrusted the vineyard were the Jews. God gave them His vineyard to till and to keep, obliging them to return but a tithe for the use of the soil. What did they do? When God sent His servants, the prophets, to bring home the harvest, they killed them, "Jerusalem, you killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you" (Matt. 23:37). Finally God sends His Son (Heb. 1:1 ff.), who fares no better; they drive Him out of the vineyard and kill Him! ("Christ suffered outside the gate!"). Christ places the question, and the Jews themselves give judgment on the wretched husbandmen: "He will utterly destroy those evil men, and will let the vineyard to other vine-dressers," i.e., to the Gentiles.

The Gospel concludes by noting in plain language that the chief priests and Pharisees were planning His death. Does it not seem as if the whole story of the passion were unrolled

before us in this parable? (The catechumens would not have missed the comforting words: the kingdom of God shall be given to them.)

Fourth Station. What is the Fourth Station? It is the Sacrifice of the Mass itself—no longer a figure but a reality, though a veiled reality. We modern Christians in particular must begin to realize that the Mass is *the* memorial of Christ's saving passion. No "Way of the Cross" can re-present Calvary like the Mass. In very truth the crucified body of Christ and His sacrificed blood are before us; in the hands of the Church they are the material of the sacrifice. At each of these stations we sing a crucifixion hymn; note how all four chants have one theme, suffering. If we pray the four psalms (16, 119, 39, 11) in full at the four stations of the Mass, our souls will vibrate in harmony with the suffering, mystical Christ.

2. Holy Mass (Ego autem). The Mass is dominated by the thought of suffering. It is Friday, four weeks before Good Friday. The *Introit,* a very lovely prayer, prompts a number of reflections, "Justified I shall appear before Your face; I shall be filled when Your splendor is revealed." Who is saying this? It may be the catechumens, penitents, and faithful voicing their longing for Easter as they enter. For the moment they are enduring the humiliations of Lent, but on Easter Eve they will appear in white robes before the Lord's face and be filled with the Bread of life. For the penitents Holy Thursday will be the day of reconciliation, while the faithful experience this Easter glory in advance through the holy Sacrifice and Communion. For all these groups the Introit antiphon marks the final goal of the long, hard road of Lent.

But we may also place the words of the Introit upon the lips of Christ and St. Vitalis. Again Easter glory is the final goal on the "long, hard road" of suffering that they are now traveling. So appropriate is the Introit as an entrance prayer that we might well utter it as an ejaculation before every holy Mass! For at every Mass we look upon the face of Christ (Canon) and are filled with His glory (*Comm.*).

The *Collect* continues the theme; after the hard road of

Joseph's mistreatment at the hands of his brothers prefigured the passion of Jesus (St. Vitalis, today's station saint, was likewise thrown into a pit). The winepress in the center is the Church; at every holy Mass the Eucharistic wine flows for us from the altar. On top we see the fulfillment of Joseph's dream in Christ and the glorified members of His kingdom. On the day of the great and final harvest our sheaves too will bend low in worship before Him. In the Mass this is already foreshadowed as we place our sheaves (offertory gifts) around the altar.

Lent may God bring us with pure hearts *ad sancta ventura* — to Easter! The *Lesson* shows us the Cross in the distant dawn of the Old Testament as the figure of Joseph rises before us. In the *Gradual* we hear Joseph, Christ, and Vitalis lament in their suffering, "In my affliction I cried to the Lord and He heard me." There is the closest relationship between the typical sense of the Lesson and the message underlying the *Gospel* parable. Christ is rejected by the Jews and put to death. Note how the three most ancient Masses of this week say the same thing! "When you have lifted up the Son of Man. . . . We go up to Jerusalem . . . ," and today the parable.

The *Offertory* chant echoes the Lessons, especially the Gospel. It is a lament of the suffering Lord and should clarify the meaning of the Offertory procession

as an entrance into suffering with Christ. The *Communion,* likewise under the sign of suffering, comes from the lips of the suffering Savior: "You, Lord, will keep us and protect us from this evil generation." The *Secret* makes a double plea: through this celebration may the holy Sacrifice remain alive in us and by our cooperation may it unfold its strength. Schuster observes correctly how no translation can compare with the classic beauty of the original.

Like all the Orations of this Mass, the *Postcommunion* is unusually terse and full of meaning. What a lovely phrase, *accepto pignore salutis aeternae,* "having received the pledge of eternal salvation," may we advance so as actually to attain it. In the *Prayer over the People* we promise to "be active doing good."

3. Psalm 11. God's Truth and Man's Blasphemies. The psalm is the outcry of the better element in man against evils in the world. Everywhere there is sin, falsehood, selfishness! The only true and genuine refuge remaining is God's inspired word.

"Help, O Lord, for no one now is dutiful;
faithfulness has vanished from among men.

The illustration portrays the two types of men spoken of in Psalm 11. The frivolous, deceitful children of the world propagate their vain thoughts in endless publications. Their efforts are symbolized by the two flying basilisks scattering sinful literature. Another appropriate symbol for such men is the chameleon with its constantly changing color and long, protruding tongue. The centerpiece represents the word of God — the Gospel upon a lectern between two lights. Wherever the light of God's word shines, the powers of darkness take to flight.

Everyone speaks falsehood to his neighbor;
with smooth lips they speak, and double heart.

May the Lord destroy all smooth lips,
every boastful tongue,
Those who say, 'We are heroes with our tongues;
our lips are our own; who is lord over us?'

'Because they rob the afflicted, and the needy sigh,
now will I arise,' says the Lord;
'I will grant safety to him who longs for it.'

The promises of the Lord are sure,
like tried silver, freed from dross, sevenfold refined.
You, O Lord, will keep us
and preserve us always from this generation,
While about us the wicked strut
and in high place are the basest of men."

SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Station at Sts. Marcellinus and Peter

Remorseful and penitent he wanted to become a slave, but his father made him a prince

God's call goes out to penitents and catechumens without previous personal merit. We, who have already responded, praise the mystery of election and conversion.

By means of the antiphons at sunrise and sunset the Church wishes us to re-enact the drama of the prodigal son. In the morning we go to "our Father" humble and repentant, i.e., we go to church. In the evening God adorns us with princely dignity as members of His kingdom, "I will go to my Father and say to Him: Father, make me as one of Your hired servants" (Ben. Ant.). "The Father, however, said to His servants: Bring quickly the best robe (*stolam primam*) and put it on him; give him a ring for his hand and shoes for his feet" (Magn. Ant.).

In his sorrow he wanted to become a *slave*, his Father makes him a *prince*! Note how the scene of the prodigal's reinstatement resembles the solemn investiture of a bishop in the robes of his pontifical office. How well these two chants summarize the essence of penance, and exemplify the Church's pedagogical method so full of comfort and consolation.

1. **Holy Mass (Lex Domini).** Today's stational saints are the Roman martyrs, Peter and Marcellinus; the former was a priest, the latter an exorcist. During Diocletian's persecution they converted many to the true faith. Then, after a harsh confinement, they were tortured in various ways and finally beheaded.

Peter and Marcellinus have been highly honored in the Roman Church; for centuries their names have stood in the diptychs of the Roman Canon. Today we pilgrimage to the most ancient church dedicated to their honor; documents witness to its existence as early as the sixth century, and to its distinction as a station in the seventh. In the course of centuries the structure has been completely rebuilt; no portion of the original basilica is now in existence.

Our Mass text was influenced by the two stational saints in various ways. We notice at once the planned parallelism between the two Lessons, both tell a story about a pair of brothers (next Saturday's Mass is similarly constructed, and may like-

Pictured are the objects which the prodigal son received from his father upon his return home. The inscription points out their spiritual significance: the vestment of supernatural sonship; readiness for the Gospel of peace (shoes); the ring of fidelity and trust (marital union with God).

wise be of very ancient origin). The chants are unusually joyful. The Mass is always a sacrifice of thanksgiving and joy! For the *Introit* we sing Psalm 18, "A Hymn to the Sun," with special emphasis on the second part which unfolds the excellence of God's law. Catechumens and penitents join us as we sing the praises of Christian teaching which refreshes the soul and brings wisdom to little children.

In the *Collect* we pray that our bodily fasting may contribute to satisfying the needs of our souls; *vegetatio animarum* implies a new bloom in our life of grace. Both Lessons tell about two brothers of whom the younger and less qualified received special privileges while the older one was passed by. The *Lesson* points its message more directly to the catechumens, the *Gospel* to the penitents. The *Lesson* treats the mystery of vocation, Jacob receives the birthright blessing instead of his older brother Esau. The *Gospel* is concerned with the grace of conversion. The two younger brothers typify the call of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. The Eucharistic sacrifice is the joyous banquet prepared for all, faithful Christians, penitents, and catechumens, by our heavenly Father in anticipation of Holy Thursday and Easter Eve.

The *Communion*, therefore, is taken from the Gospel. The Church tells us, as it were, to rejoice that our brothers, the catechumens and penitents, are rising from the dead. Now we understand why the chants are so joyful—the Easter theme is touched upon. Already we see ourselves at the end of our task of fasting and spiritual conversion. How lightsome and joyous the hymn to the Sun! The Easter Sun is rising!

The *Offertory* too sees the glow of Easter light and begs for a genuine change, like the "son risen from the dead." Repentance and penance, which seem to be so much a part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, hardly enter into consideration in the liturgy of this Mass; rather our attention is diverted to the mystery of election, to the infinite, fatherly goodness of God toward sinful men.

The *Secret* manifests a strong awareness of sin, may our own sins and those of others be forgiven. The *Postcommunion*

has strong emotional overtones: may the libation of the holy sacrament penetrate the depths of our hearts and affect us deeply by its blessing. (The translation of this prayer is unusually difficult.) The *Prayer over the People* expresses our utter reliance upon God's grace as well as our hope in heavenly protection.

2. **Divine Office.** Today's Office devotes considerable space to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. At Matins even a responsory is taken from the parable, a rare occurrence in Lent. The Breviary seems to accord greater emphasis to its message of penance than the missal. At Matins we read a passage from St. Ambrose's commentary on St. Luke's Gospel.

"In God's kingdom no one is under age, and one's faith is not measured by his years. . . . Whoever leaves the Church loses his Father's inheritance. . . . In what country can one be farther away than when one separates himself from the Church, not by traveling to distant lands but by his manner of life . . . for whoever separates himself from Christ is an exile from his true fatherland and becomes a denizen of this world. But we are not exiles and strangers, we are fellow citizens of the saints and members of God's household! Once we were far away, but now we are brought close by the blood of Christ. . . ." What deep truths lie hid in these statements!

"Father, I have sinned before heaven and in Your sight! I am unworthy to be called Your son. Let me be as one of Your servants! So many servants have bread in abundance at my Father's house, and I perish here from hunger! I shall go to my Father and say: make me as one of Your hired servants!" (resp.).

3. **The Graces of Vocation and Conversion.** Today we are thankful for two great graces, vocation and conversion. Let us meditate upon the two Lessons from this viewpoint.

a) In the Lesson we are told how Jacob illicitly acquired the birthright blessing, while his first-born brother went away empty-handed. We are not now concerned with the question of the morality of Jacob and Rebecca's conduct. What is of primary importance to us is how God selects a person who had no prior claims upon Him.

Think of the deep impression this truth must have made

upon the catechumens. They were Gentiles; God disregarded the Jews, and in preference to millions of others called them, the catechumens. How grateful they must have been for this extraordinary grace! (St. Paul has treated the problem very thoroughly in his letter to the Romans, especially from the negative viewpoint, i.e., the rejection of the Jews. We will try to stress the positive aspects of the question.)

Let us stop for a moment to reflect: yes, we were chosen from thousands. Many others still are "in the exterior darkness," while we stand before God and praise Him as we celebrate the sacred mysteries. Is that not a sufficient indication of our election? Do not ascribe it to personal merit, but to the force of grace. From all eternity God "knew" me as His child; therefore He also "predestined me to become like unto the image of His Son." Therefore He called me at a definite time, and when I obeyed His call, He "justified" me, i.e., He endowed me with grace. Now I am approaching the final stage, He intends to "glorify" me, i.e., to lead me to glory (Rom. 8:28-30).

How grateful I should be! How I should join with St. Paul in his wonderful song, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomparable are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! From Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever!"

b) In addition to vocation God has tendered us another special privilege, the grace of conversion. This truth is brought out powerfully in today's parable, revealing as it does God's unlimited mercy and goodness. Imagine again what effect this story must have had on the assembled faithful in the ancient Church. Beside the catechumens stood the penitents; they too received words of comfort as they heard how the Father was patiently awaiting them, how He would not let them take the lowest place. To be slave and servant the prodigal deemed a just penance (the penitents are actually in that condition now, excluded from the family circle and table), but the Father makes him a prince, clothes him again with a royal robe, with

the ring and shoes of the free and eldest son. His mercy can go no farther.

Let us now apply this parable to ourselves. God has given us the grace of redemption. After baptism most of us have slipped from the right road or at least have often been indifferent and lax. While others were submerged and lost in the quagmire of sin, we have always been rescued by God; in our hearts God put the desire to repent. We never made peace with sin, again and again the will to improve was active within us. At this very time it is by God's grace that we are zealously keeping Lent in order to approach Easter with purified hearts.

Today's Mass is one of joy and thanksgiving. Holy Communion is the seal and confirmation of two great graces, divine election and conversion. Today's Communion banquet is the joyful repast of God's elected and converted children. In today's liturgy Easter has been anticipated; with God as witness we know that those who were dead among us will come to life during this Lenten season; whatever graces we have lost we shall find again. The dead and the diseased will celebrate with Christ a joyous Easter resurrection.

4. Psalm 12. From Abandonment to Jubilant Thanksgiving. This beautifully constructed psalm ascends the three steps proper to every good prayer, viz., 1. a need for God's help; 2. fervent petition; 3. joy and confidence that God will hear.

How long, O Lord? Will You utterly forget me?
How long will You hide Your face from me?

The three stages of the soul's ascent are portrayed in the design: a) chalice — the "Olivet hours" of suffering (the fourfold "How long. . ." of Ps. 12:2–3); b) anchor — twilight (the soul pleads for light; cf. Ps. 12:4); c) sun and psaltery — noonday brightness (joyfully confident that God will answer favorably; cf. Ps. 12:6).

How long shall I harbor sorrow in my soul,
grief in my heart day after day?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look, answer me, O Lord, my God!
Give light to my eyes that I may not sleep in death
lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him";
Lest my foes rejoice at my downfall
though I trusted in Your kindness.

Let my heart rejoice in your salvation;
let me sing of the Lord, "He has been good to me."

THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

We now enter the second part of Lent.

Two weeks ago, after a few introductory days in which the Church explained to us the spirit of the Lenten exercises, we entered the training school of Christ on the first Sunday of Lent. We adopted defensive tactics, guarding ourselves against attacks by the prince of this world. With the weapon of morti-

Today's leading themes are represented in the drawing. To the right is the kingdom of Satan (serpent, dragon, storm clouds). The catechumens are led out of this kingdom of sin and darkness into God's realm of light. The stational saint, Lawrence, is aiding a youth to free himself from the entanglement of thorns. Over the altar toward which the catechumens are joyously hastening, the stronger One, Christ, is enthroned as a sun; His rays light the lamps brought as offerings. Christ "extends the right hand of His majesty" in welcome and protection. The nest of doves reminds us of the Communion antiphon.

fication we battled our way to the Mountain of Transfiguration. The theme of suffering was constantly present during these two first weeks. In the first it was the figure of the forty day fast of Christ, Moses, and Elias, followed by transfiguration (a figure of Christ's passion and resurrection); during the second week greater emphasis was accorded the same ideas.

Now another phase of Lent begins as Christ passes from defense to attack. A typical note is struck by the Gospel of the strong man who is overcome by one stronger than himself. From now on the liturgy devotes more time to the catechumens; the three most ancient Masses this week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) are concerned principally with the catechumens. Christ wrestles in them. The other Masses (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) are quite similar in construction and content to those of last week. If one sought to sketch the Christ-picture of the coming week, it would represent the Physician and Savior of the soul standing before us—Monday (the Physician of Israel), Thursday (the holy doctors Cosmas and Damian), Friday and Saturday (Christ and sinners).

Main thoughts of the Masses this week. *Sunday*: the catechumens are the "enlightened"; Christ conquers the devil in them. *Monday*: the leprous pagan Naaman is a good model for Christian catechumens; by way of contrast the Jews seek to kill Jesus. *Wednesday*: the catechumens receive the law (the commandments). *Friday*: two figures of baptism—Moses strikes water from the rock, Christ promises the Samaritan woman living water. *Tuesday*: the Mass, built on the same lines as last Tuesday's, presents Christ as teacher. *Thursday*: "Healers' " Mass in honor of the holy doctors Cosmas and Damian. *Saturday*: the innocent Susanna and the contrite adulteress serve as inspiration to the penitents.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Station at St. Lawrence

The strong man is overcome by One stronger

This Sunday's liturgy has a simple and easily recognizable structure. Christ makes us *men of light*, He overcomes the

devil in us through baptism and the Eucharist. The Mass is more directly applicable to the catechumens, but the faithful too are included in all the texts.

1. In Ancient Times. Let us imagine ourselves in Rome fifteen centuries ago. We see a procession winding through the holy city. First come the catechumens, then the penitents in their garments of hair, then the faithful, and lastly the clergy and Pope. They enter the famous basilica of St. Lawrence outside the city walls; this hero among martyrs will be our model in the defeat of the devil, the "strong man."

With what longing they enter this church! All gather around the grave of St. Lawrence. With eyes directed toward the sanctuary (the altar is Christ), they feel safe from the "snares" of the enemy (*Intr.*). Mother Church supports the prayers of "those who humbly beseech" and prays for their defense (*Coll.*). Now she raises her voice to speak. Before her stand gray-headed men who have wrestled their way to the faith, tender maidens who have refused rich marriages for Christ's sake, youths disinherited by their parents because they wanted to become Christians. They all have fought outward and inward battles, and victory is not yet wholly won. *Today* the decision must be confirmed, Christ must rule as "king and God."

The Church begins by recalling the past. "What sort of ideals did you once have?" Oh, avarice, lust, craving for pleasure seemed to be the whole of life. You were in pitch black darkness. But now another ideal gleams above you, Christ, the divine Sun. A great change has taken place within you; you have passed from night to brightest day and now must walk as children of the divine light. You are stars, children of the Sun! You must be men of light, stars in the dark sky of night! Such is your profession.

The Church continues speaking through the deacon. The strong man, the Prince of this world, was your king until now. As long as you were subject to him he remained quiet. Now that you have pushed him from his throne, he thrashes about stirring up a storm; your relatives, your associates, your

entire environment, and hell itself have turned upon you. Your new master, the stronger one, Christ, must ascend the throne. The victory of Christ in you must become an enduring fact.

One serious warning! Great sacrifices are demanded, you must surrender everything—the world, honor, possessions, enjoyment. Will you be able to endure it? Woe if you fall away again! "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, who have both tasted the heavenly gift and become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and then have fallen away, to be renewed again to repentance" (Heb. 6:4-6).

The bishop finishes his sermon but his words echo and reecho in the souls of the enlightened. Now the catechumens are dismissed. The faithful remain and celebrate the Sacrifice. During the Canon today prayers are also offered for the catechumens' sponsors. And the faithful? Are they not still struggling for the crown? Are there no dark spots in their souls? Is the strong man altogether dethroned? Does Christ rule in all the recesses of their hearts? Is the danger of lapse utterly removed? Suppose the executioner should knock at their doors? Now for all these battles there is One who brings victory, Christ within them, Christ in the holy Sacrifice, Christ who delivered Himself up for love of them.

At the *Offertory*, therefore, they lay upon the altar their determination to keep God's commandments. In the Sacrifice Christ seals their offering, and they become children of light. He enters His kingdom again, He is supreme in their hearts, their "king and their Lord" (*Comm.*). Thus has this Mass guided and assisted us through the *battle of Lent* to Easter victory.

2. The Scrutinies. Today, at the pitch of the Lenten battle, the catechumens assemble in the church of St. Lawrence, the patron of catechumens, as on Septuagesima at the beginning of the Lenten season. In this church the exorcisms, or public expulsion of the evil spirit, were usually performed. The Mass of the catechumens is filled with references to this action. St. Lawrence, who conquered the devil so heroically in his martyr-

dom, will be our patron and protector during the second part of Lent.

This Sunday brings the catechumens a step closer to the Church; the day was called "Scrutiny Sunday" and marked the beginning of a series of tests to which the catechumens were subjected. The faithful were invited to take part in these sessions, the number of which increased until there were seven. The scrutinies were usually held on Wednesdays and Saturdays; the most important one was that on Wednesday in the fourth week of Lent.

3. Scripture Reading. Today the Church introduces us to the patriarch Joseph, one of the most lovable characters in the Old Testament. A peculiar charm attaches itself to the story of this remarkable person. Dutiful and innocent, loved by an aged father, clothed in a multi-colored tunic, he appears before us as a young boy. But very soon he tastes bitterness and sorrow in the school of life. At the age of sixteen he is sold by his brothers. Hardly has the sun of fortune begun to rise again for him in the house of Phutiphar when he is once more encompassed by the "dungeon's shadows," a prisoner for preserving his purity. But finally he rises from the graveyard of prison to the highest honors the country can give. The slave is made a prince, a minister of Pharao, and the son believed dead becomes the savior of hostile brothers.

A full wreath of virtues adorns the youth: how gracious he is to his brothers, how unbowed by misfortune, how temperate in good fortune! How apparent in his life is the guiding hand of divine Providence which often works in wondrous ways, turning misfortune into the greatest blessing. That Joseph is a figure of the suffering Christ we saw already in the passion Mass last Friday.

In the Office St. Ambrose preaches a very stimulating discourse on the patriarch. We see at once how highly the forefathers of the Chosen People were esteemed by the ancient Church. He begins, "The lives of the saints present a pattern of life for other persons. We have, therefore, received a number of rather complete documents that we may be able to follow the path of holiness which was marked out for us by the virtues of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the other just men of

old with whom we have become acquainted in these writings. . . . Today the life story of holy Joseph is presented to us. He practiced many different kinds of virtue, but chastity shone in him with a special radiance."

We may see a different virtue in each of the patriarchs. From Abraham we may learn self-sacrificing faith, from Isaac purity of heart, from Jacob patience and endurance in suffering. "Holy Joseph is held up before us as a mirror of chastity. His behavior and conduct show his unassuming modesty, a gleaming virtue which had as a companion unusual personal charm."

He was loved by his parents more than the others, a fact that aroused his brothers' envy. Nevertheless, he exercised heroic love toward those who hated him, a virtue so much more admirable in one who lived before the Gospel was preached. Thus Ambrose. Today and during the coming week our hearts and minds should lovingly linger on the story of Joseph. In this the Church aids us by the responsories of Matins, thirteen reflections which cover the whole eventful life of the patriarch.

4. The Hours. Quotations from the Gospel occur in both the night and day Hours of the Breviary today. The Venerable Bede, Doctor of the Church, explains the Gospel in the lessons of the third nocturn. "Three miracles take place in the possessed man who was cured: the dumb man speaks, the blind man sees, the possessed is delivered from the devil. These three miracles are daily repeated at the conversion of a sinner: first, the devil is expelled, then he sees by the light of faith, and lastly, he opens his lips to praise God." (In a single sentence Bede has explained the deep liturgical significance of the pericope.)

The liturgy desires us to occupy ourselves with thoughts from the Gospel at every Hour. At Lauds, when the veil of darkness is still spread over nature, when the world still "abides in the shadow of death," the Church admits that the strong one (the devil) reigns in undisturbed possession of his kingdom. But in the *Benedictus* she indicates that with the rising *Oriens ex alto* his power begins to wane. "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his courtyard, his property is undisturbed."

At Prime the topic is the miracle wrought for the possessed man. At Terce, the Hour dedicated to the Holy Ghost, we repeat our Saviour's words: "If I cast out devils by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." By "the finger of God" the fathers understood the Holy Ghost (recall

the line from the hymn, *digitus paternae dexterae*). At Sext our thoughts dwell on the passage, "He who does not gather with me scatters; and he who is not with me is against me!" At None, as the day turns to its end, we are reminded of Satan's last attempts.

And when we sing the *Magnificat*, the day's thanksgiving canticle, the theme is the woman's praise of the blessed Woman "whose womb bore the Messiah and whose breasts nursed Him." At the next instant, however, we hear from the lips of the Lord Himself how we can share in her bliss, "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Mark

The Physician in Israel

Pagans (Naaman) seek out the Physician of Israel and are cured; but the Jews try to kill Him. Thus the Lenten themes of baptism and suffering are linked together.

Like Naaman the catechumens, penitents, and faithful approach the true Physician (Gosp.) prefigured by Eliseus. Some will be spiritually healed in the Jordan of baptism, others through the Eucharist. The Jordan represents the stream of graces coming to us through the mysteries of our faith. In ancient mosaics (e.g., in the Lateran), the River Jordan was adorned with water fowl and fish, showing that it is a life-giving river. The most direct answer to the Communion question, however, is had in the initial Q: our salvation is Christ, the true Ichthys, in His sacrifice upon the Cross (anchor — a Cross symbol). *O Crux, ave, spes unica,* Hail, O Cross, our only hope!

The antiphons at sunrise and sunset: "Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country" (Ben. Ant.). "Jesus passed through their midst and went His way" (Magn. Ant.). The Church wants us to spend the day in Nazareth where Christ's countrymen received Him in so hostile a manner and even sought to put Him to death. Regard the event as a preview of Holy Week.

1. Station at St. Mark. The stational saint is Pope St. Mark, who ruled the Christian community in 336. The Church celebrates his memory on October 7. His pontificate, under Constantine, lasted but eight months. Of his activity we know only that he built two churches, today's stational church and one dedicated to St. Balbina. In the church to which we pilgrimage today, the evangelist Mark is also honored.

As we enter the edifice we immediately notice the large mosaic on the arch of the apse (from the time of Gregory IV, 827-844). In the center Christ stands with His right hand raised; to His left Pope St. Mark, Sts. Agapitus and Agnes; to his right St. Felicissimus, St. Mark the Evangelist and Gregory IV (with a square halo to indicate he was still living); at a lower level twelve symbolic lambs walk toward the Lamb of God from the two cities, Jerusalem (the Jews) and Bethlehem (the Gentiles). The church is beautifully embellished, and its appurtenances in marble are exceptional even in Rome. Its many relics are today exposed for veneration by the faithful.

2. Holy Mass (In Deo). At the services today an announcement was made inviting the faithful to attend the Wednesday scrutiny. The invitation was given in these words:

"Beloved brethren, you know that the day of scrutiny, when the chosen ones are instructed with heavenly doctrine, is near. Therefore, assemble with pious interest next Wednesday at the third hour, that in a guiltless manner and with God's assistance we may perform the heavenly mystery whereby the devil and his pomps are destroyed and the door of heaven is opened."

There is some doubt as to whether the confident *Introit* lament comes from the lips of Christ or from the catechumens who have determined to tear themselves loose from Satan's

power. But if we interpret the cry as from the mouth of the Church, both possibilities are satisfied. For the mystic Christ is now wrestling with the "strong man" for control over souls.

The *Collect* asks for sufficient grace to subdue extravagant desire through the practice of fasting. There are points of similarity between the two Lessons, and points of contrast. The second Old Testament incident that Christ alluded to in the synagogue of Nazareth, viz., the story of the Gentile Naaman, is told in full in the *Lesson*. How differently men react! Pagans sought out the Physician of Israel, while the Jews rejected Him. The Naaman story was especially instructive for the catechumens because the washing in the Jordan typified the sacrament of baptism. Leprosy was a figure of sin, and the Jordan in old mosaics signifies the waters of baptism. The healing of Naaman belongs to the ancient Church's canon of symbols.

We may impersonate Naaman appealing for a cure as we chant the *Gradual*, in fact there is a deep resemblance between ourselves and the Syrian on more than one point. The same holds true at the *Offertory*. Naaman is, indeed, the pivot of the action in today's Mass mystery, the symbol of the Church purifying herself. According to the *Secret*, the Sacrifice should become for us "a healing sacrament," i.e., a means of grace.

The *Communion* expresses our sighs and longings for the Easter feast. Lent is our Babylonian captivity, while the happy jubilation over the newly baptized, the return of the penitents to the community, and the spiritual renewal of the faithful is Easter. The petition embodied in the *Postcommunion* has almost the same wording as the prayer said while purifying the chalice at every holy Mass. The *Prayer over the People* resembles the Collect of the first Sunday of Advent.

We may say that an atmosphere of oppression and sorrow pervades the entire Mass text. The Church senses the power of hell and is seriously trying to liberate all her members from its baneful influences. The moral admonitions of the Mass flow from its dogmatic message.

3. **God's Grace and Man's Response.** If contrasted, today's

two Lessons take on unexpected significance. With considerable effort, a heathen seeks out the Physician of Israel and is cured; the Physician of Israel comes to His fellowmen and they drive Him from the city, they even try putting Him to death. One desires grace, the other rejects it. These are the two possible ways in which man may react to heaven's greatest gift. (Last Tuesday's Mass had a similar message.)

a) Naaman. A splendid character, with many noble qualities! The church delights in extolling outstanding Gentiles, e.g., the officer of Capharnaum, the Canaanite woman, the widow of Sarephta. Naaman was a general, beloved by the king, the army, and his family; his servants called him father. He was sorely tried—a leper, the victim of a horrible disease. We may presume that Naaman had already visited all the doctors and that he was glad to follow the advice of the Jewish slave-girl to seek a cure in Israel.

But first his faith must be tested in a series of trials: 1) the king of Israel becomes quite upset upon hearing the matter and rends his garments, suspecting some political maneuver. 2) Eliseus, who saves the situation, does not even bother to meet the general. The prophet is no servant of princes, and presents do not impress him. 3) The Syrian is told to bathe in the Jordan seven times. This cuts deep. But upon the urging of his servants he submits, and at once is cleansed. Humility, the proof of genuine faith, is required of everyone.

For us who have lost paradise through pride and haughtiness, there is no other way to health than the low road of humility. Paul says it so beautifully, "Be humble, as Christ was; for although He was God, He emptied Himself and assumed the nature of a slave, humiliating Himself unto death, yes, even death on a Cross." For us too humility is the great test. God puts us in a certain state of life, takes away good health, demands personal sacrifices, and we must submit.

Much of the Church's discipline serves as excellent training in humility (e.g., public and private confession); and faith itself requires humility. Let us again reflect on the mystery of divine selection. According to our Lord's own words, Naaman

was chosen from hundreds, and healed. I too have been chosen! What a grace! How grateful I should be, how well I must use the grace! "Receive not the grace of God in vain," we read on the first Sunday of Lent.

b) Nazareth. In direct contrast to Naaman's spirit was the attitude shown by the people of Nazareth, Jesus' own city. The liturgy loves to contrast the rejection of the Jews with the selection of the Gentiles. The discerning eye may note a trace of anti-semitism in the ancient liturgy of Rome. Last week it appeared in the parable of Lazarus and Dives, in the two pair of brothers, Esau and Jacob, and in the two sons in the Parable of the Prodigal. Today the contrast between Jew and Gentile is especially noticeable. Israel wished to kill her Physician, whereas a Gentile traveled a great distance to be healed by Him.

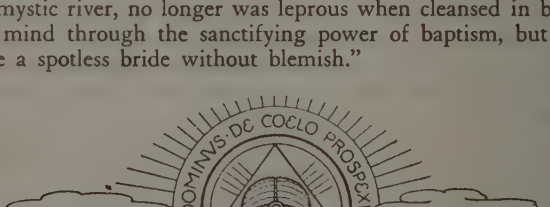
The sad fact of Israel's rejection should be a serious warning not to esteem lightly the grace of selection, not to be indifferent to it. Even though we Christians are a chosen people, God may reject us singly or in groups, as He did the Jews. What the Gospel tells us seems like a prelude to the story of the Lord's passion. Jesus comes to His home city and His neighbors rise against Him. They would have cast Him headlong off a precipice, had He not miraculously prevented it. Note how we are approaching the great decision of Good Friday ever more closely.

The chants are prayers of petition, serious in tone; Christ is wrestling with the devil for the possession of my soul. Yet the formulary also contains confident, even joyous strains. In the last sentence of the Gospel, which mentions Christ's majestic passage through the ranks of His enemies, the Easter victory breaks through the dark clouds with a dazzling flash. The final chant of the Mass looks forward to Easter full of confidence; when the Lord brings back the prisoners (i.e., when Lent is over), Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad. Humbly following Christ let us continue the march to our Easter triumph.

4. Divine Office. St. Ambrose provides instructive comment on the Gospel pericope. He shows the ugliness of envy as manifested in the actions of Nazareth's inhabitants.

"The man who envies another for the fruit of his virtue will wait in vain for heaven's merciful help. The Lord is the foe of all men of ill will, and keeps His wondrous power from those who attack His good deeds in others. What Christ did in His earthly life is a pattern for that which He is constantly accomplishing as God. And whatever He does in an invisible way has been shown to us by His visible deeds."

In the leper sent to Eliseus, we may see prefigured the Church of the Gentiles. "The people that had been leprous, the people that had been full of blemish before immersion in the mystic river, no longer was leprous when cleansed in body and mind through the sanctifying power of baptism, but became a spotless bride without blemish."



5. Psalm 13. A Lament over World-wide Godlessness. This song probably originated during the Babylonian exile. It is the cry of the oppressed against the wickedness of the godless.

Content: I. The psalmist laments over the wickedness of the godless and notes the universal depravity among men (original sin)—1–3a. (II. The depravity of the godless is developed in detail—3b; these verses, which do not belong to the psalm, have been culled from Rom. 3: 13-18.) III. God will punish the wicked—4-6. Finale: a plea for liberation from exile—(7).

1 "The fool says in his heart,
'There is no God.'
Such are corrupt; they do abominable deeds;
there is not one who does good.

Cf. Ps. 13:2, "The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men."

2 The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children
of men,
to see if there be one who is wise and seeks God.

3 All alike have gone astray; they have become perverse;
there is not one who does good, not even one.
Their throat is an open sepulcher;
with their tongues they have dealt deceitfully.
The venom of asps is beneath their lips;
their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
destruction and misery are in their ways.
And the path of peace they have not known.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.

4 Will all these evildoers never learn,
they who eat up my people just as they eat bread?
They have not called upon the Lord;

5 then they shall be in great fear,
for God is with the just generation.

6 You would confound the plans of the afflicted,
but the Lord is his refuge.

7 Oh, that out of Sion would come the salvation of Israel!
When the Lord restores the well-being of His people,
then shall Jacob exult and Israel be glad.

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Pudentiana

Christ in us — The miracle of the oil

The widow, Mother Church, pours the oil of doctrine and of grace into our hearts, and pays our ransom.

The antiphons at Vespers and Lauds reveal the blessings of social action. "If two of you shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in heaven, says the Lord" (Ben. Ant.). It is exceedingly important to note that the Church chooses as antiphons those passages from the Gospel teachings which treat

of common action. The Church loves and fosters cooperation among her members.

1. **Station at St. Pudentiana.** The Martyrology on May 19 reads: "In Rome St. Pudentiana, a virgin. She endured innumerable trials, gave honorable burial to a great number of holy martyrs, and distributed her entire fortune to the poor for the love of Christ. Thus she ascended from earth to heaven."

We pilgrimage today to one of the oldest titular churches in Rome. It was built possibly as early as the third century. At the end of the fourth a basilica, still extant in its architectural outlines, replaced the previous structure. The mosaic adorning the arch of the apse dates to the pontificate of Innocent I (401-417) and is the most beautiful ancient Christian mosaic in the Holy City.

In the middle of the picture the Savior of the world sits upon an ornate throne, holding in His hand an open book with the words, *Dominus Conservator Ecclesiae Pudentianae.* To the right and left are seated the twelve apostles, Peter and Paul at

The picture was inspired by the mosaic in the stational church of St. Pudentiana, and drawn so as to visualize the leading themes of today's Mass. In the Gospel Christ says, "Where two or three are gathered together for My sake, there am I in the midst of them." Here He is enthroned between the two sisters. The mountain with the Cross and the Holy City typify our ascent to Easter glory. The oil cruses carried by the saints remind us of the "oil miracle" in the Lesson.

their head; behind the apostles on each side stands a woman wearing a large veil. In their right hands they carry wreaths which they offer to the Redeemer. The two women are the holy sisters, Pudentiana and Praxedes, whose veneration was associated with the titular church at a very early date. In the vault above the Savior towers a great cross, flanked by the symbols of the four evangelists. City buildings form the background. Beneath the figure of Jesus the Lamb of God is represented. In front of this magnificent scene the Christians of Rome for centuries celebrated today's stational service.

Much in the Mass formulary was chosen because of the station. The church, formerly called *titulus Pastoris*, was honored as the first seat of St. Peter; the Gospel, therefore, treats the binding power of the apostles and mentions Peter. The stational saint Pudentiana lost her parents early in life; she then passed her days in prayer and acts of charity. According to legend Pope Pius I celebrated Mass in her house for a long period, and she provided him with whatever he needed. Eliseus, who lived with the widow, is a figure of the Pope who through the holy Sacrifice increases the "oil" in the "vessel" of Christian souls.

2. Holy Mass (Ego clamavi). Between certain Masses of Lent the resemblance in content and presentation is easily noticeable. A comparison of today's formulary with that of last Thursday's would perhaps suggest literary dependence. On both occasions the stational saint is a maiden of the ancient Church who devoted herself to works of mercy, Balbina and Pudentiana. In both Masses the Lesson is a story—last Thursday it was about the widow of Sarephta in Elias' time, today about the widow in the days of Eliseus; on both days an "oil miracle" is recounted. In the two Gospels blessings stemming from common effort are emphasized. Both Masses direct their message to the faithful rather than the catechumens and penitents, and seem intent upon building up a cooperative Christian spirit in the assembled worshipers.

Like orphans we come to the sanctuary, searching for protection. The two lovely *Introit* metaphors (Keep me as the

apple of Your eye . . . protect me under the shadow of Your wings!") express our childlike confidence in God. Psalm 16 arouses a series of fervent reflections and expresses what should be our sentiments as we pass through Lent to our Easter goal.

The *Collect* begs for the benefits associated with religious fastings (think of the Lenten preface which enumerates these benefits). The *Lesson* relates the "oil miracle" of the prophet Eliseus. Its connection with the stational saint is probably indicated in the Parable of the Wise Virgins. Pudentiana was one of those wise virgins whose oil never failed; yes, the Church herself is the wise virgin *par excellence* who pours the oil of grace into the hearts of her children.

Let us continue allegorizing the Biblical story. An infinitely rich stream of blessings comes from the Cross, only we must make use of it. By the "oil miracle" the Church wishes to show us the supernatural value of our Lenten efforts. The widow of the Bible story is the Church. Ever since her Spouse returned home to heaven she has been harassed and her children pressed into the service of hostile creditors. Now during Lent she pleads for assistance to ward off her most exacting creditor (Satan), and Christ comes to her aid. The exercises of Lent produce a huge supply of oil with which to obtain pardon, merit, and reward (Lenten preface).

The *Gradual* is an echo of the Lesson, "Oh, how I want to be cleansed of my secret sins." The *Gospel* lists four major points for our Lenten consideration: fraternal correction, the Church's power to bind and loose (confession), the blessings of common effort, and mutual forgiveness. The *Offertory* re-echoes the Gospel, "I shall praise God's mighty and forgiving right hand"; it is an Easter motif on the lips of the faithful who remain in the Church after the dismissal of the catechumens and gratefully recall their baptismal victory. Psalm 117 is a resurrection hymn!

At the *Communion* we already see the mount of Easter, the Easter "tabernacle"; Lent is a pilgrimage to God's holy mount (Psalm 14). The *Postcommunion* gives us another lesson in practical theology; the holy Sacrifice reconciles us to God by

effecting pardon (the negative aspect) and by bestowing grace (the positive aspect).

3. Doctrine in the Gospel and Lesson. The two Lessons offer us a wealth of wholesome Lenten truths. First the Gospel. a) Brotherly correction. A commandment of the Lord that is little heeded! Either we do not correct others at all, or we correct them unfairly. Behind their backs we are able and willing to discuss their shortcomings, but generally we lack the courage to tell them face to face. On the other hand, when angry we often unjustly charge our neighbor with faults. Yet it would be a noble and friendly service to remind our neighbor of his faults in a loving manner.

The Rule of St. Augustine says: If your brother had a secret but fatal wound which he refused to reveal to a doctor through fear of the knife, would it not be a real service to him to report it? To be sure it requires much tact and patience to make the bitter pill of correction palatable. The task would be easier if I would be more willing to accept such correction, if I would use the occasion to become better acquainted with myself.

b) The power of binding and loosing. "Whatever you loose on earth. . . ." What a joyful message for those who observe Lent as the penitents of old. Let us thank God for having given this power to His Church! The greatest evil is sin. How well David described the torments of conscience in Psalm 31, "Because I did not acknowledge my sins, my bones grew old while I groaned all the day long. For day and night Your hand weighed heavy upon me; I turned in anguish of conscience, but the thorn pierced deeper and deeper." A good confession frees us from the pangs of conscience, the greatest of human sufferings. Who has not experienced this happiness! Make good use of the Church's power to forgive; it will benefit you tremendously.

c) The blessings of common effort. Sin is divisive. Therefore Christ who came to give unity and peace blesses efforts made in common. The Church He founded is a "communion of saints." In the Gospel Christ speaks of the Church as a court of law and as a "union" of individuals. To the first He promises

ratification of their decisions, but to those congregated "in His Name" He promises His very presence.

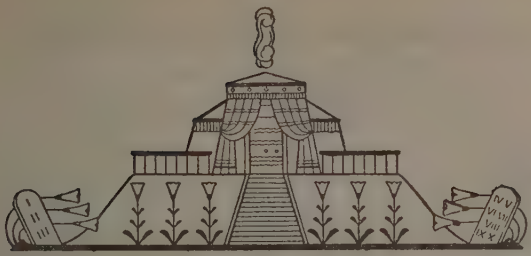
He dwells in a special way wherever several Christians come together, whether in marriage or friendship. Of course, the finest example is the parish. In Christian parishes throughout the world Christ is present to comfort and encourage. If this is true of the parish at large, how much more when the community is gathered in the most perfect expression of common prayer, the Mass. Then Christ lives in our midst, not only in the Eucharist but as Head of His mystical Body. Let us intensify the spirit of which Christ is here speaking. Let us be deeply convinced of the powerful forces inherent in group action.

d) Pardon. A prerequisite for success in any penitential work is readiness to forgive the faults of others. Our willingness to forgive should be as inexhaustible as the sea—seventy times, i.e., always. Let no trace of ill will remain, forgive from your heart's depths. Pardon as an antecedent to pardon is anchored in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Why, we even have a certain title in justice to divine pardon if we pardon our neighbor!

The Lesson also provides food for thought. In the figure of the "oil miracle" we see the sacramental life of the Church. The great task of the widow-mother is to pour the oil of grace into our souls. Or better, oil is the symbol of Christ; the very name Christ means "the anointed One." The Church is pouring Christ into our souls! As St. Augustine says, "Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ Himself."

Briefly, the essence of Lent is that "now no longer I, but Christ lives in me." In the Mass the widowed Church places her Bridegroom into your soul by the word of God and by the Sacrament. Here is fulfilled the "oil miracle" of the Old Testament.

4. Psalm 14. Citizens of God's Kingdom. A simple, lovely song written by David when the Ark of the Covenant was transferred to Sion.



Content:

1. A question: who is God's true servant? (1)

2. The answer: the innocent and just man who does not sin (2)

   a) with his tongue (3a)

   b) in action (3b)

   c) through perjury, bribery, usury (4–5a)

3. Conclusion: the just man's reward (5b)

1 "O Lord, who shall sojourn in Your tent?
  Who shall dwell on Your holy mountain?

2 He who walks blamelessly and does justice;
  who thinks the truth in his heart
3 and slanders not with his tongue;
  Who harms not his fellow man,
  nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
4 By whom the reprobate is despised,
  while he honors those who fear the Lord;
  Who, though it be to his loss, changes not his pledged word;
5 who lends not his money at usury
  and accepts no bribe against the innocent.

  He who does these things
  shall never be disturbed.

The tabernacle of the New Covenant is our parish church. To approach with spiritual profit one must be clean of heart (lily) and obedient (tablets of the decalog).

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Xystus

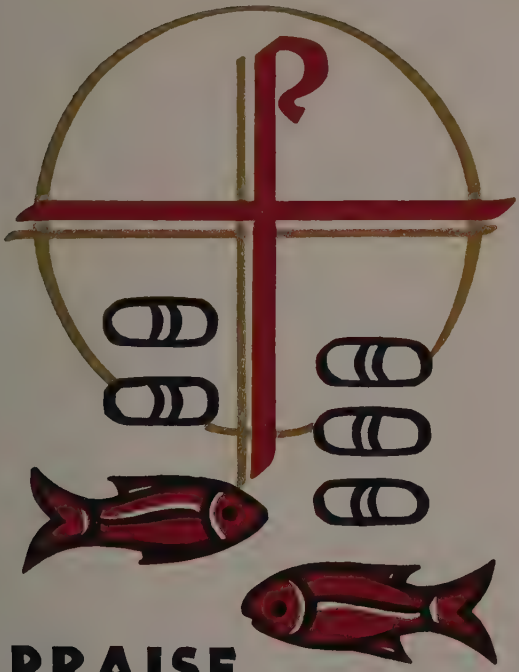
Christ, the new Lawgiver, gives us His law

Today's Mass, a closely knit unit, is devoted entirely to the catechumens. In the ancient Church Wednesday of the third week of Lent was an important day because it marked the first scrutiny on the catechumens; their names were recorded in the "Book of Life" or baptismal register, and the ten Commandments were formally given to them. This is the reason why pericopes mentioning the commandments were selected for the Epistle and Gospel. We, the baptized, likewise desire to receive God's commandments from the Church's hands in order to begin obeying them faithfully.

1. **Holy Mass (Ego autem).** The stational saint, Pope Xystus or Sixtus II, appears in the martyrdom account of St. Lawrence (died 258). As a result of the high honor accorded him, a stational church was dedicated to his memory and to it his remains were transferred from the papal crypt in the catacomb of St. Callistus. Under his guidance we join the catechumens and approach the altar for the sacred mysteries.

Introit: how happy the catechumens were upon advancing another step closer to Christ! "God had regarded their lowliness." Psalm 30 presents a good psychological analysis of how they suffered and struggled before finally arriving at their happy destination (Easter motif). The Introit is a cry of thanksgiving and joy which re-echoes the Magnificat theme. Fasting and abstinence from sin must go hand in hand if we want divine forgiveness (*Coll.*).

In the *Lesson* we witness a mighty drama. We see the children of Israel encamped in the desert with Mt. Sinai rising before them like a smoking altar of sacrifice. In thunder and lightning the *Majestas Domini* breaks forth over them to promulgate the ten Commandments. Now during the holy Sacrifice the *Majestas Domini* appears again but in the lowly form of bread! As the great moment nears I sink in shame, for is



PRAISE

THE LORD,

FOR HE IS GOOD +

there a single commandment of which I can say, "I am innocent of grave violation?" In the *Gradual*, therefore, I pray a penitential psalm, and continue in the same spirit for the *Tract*.

The *Gospel* raises our sights. The Pharisees emphasized external acts, Jesus looks deeply into the heart. Again in the *Offertory* I fall to the ground, begging mercy in the austere words of Psalm 108; yet I am full of confidence for "sweet is Your mercy." The *Secret* provides another lesson on the theology of the Mass; the effect of this Sacrifice will be to "deliver us from evil."

A beautiful *Communion* both as to antiphon and psalm! The commandments, taught us in the Lessons, are the "ways of life" which at present lead to Easter glory but in the end to the joys of heaven; there jubilantly we shall see the radiant face of Christ. The *Postcommunion* enumerates three fruits of the Sacrifice: sanctification, atonement, fulfillment of the heavenly promises.

2. The Commandments. God lays down two prerequisites for admittance into His kingdom; the Canon of the Mass names them, *fides et devotio*, faith and self-sacrifice. We must believe and we must sacrifice our self-will by observing God's Commandments. The Church must place these two requirements before each prospective neophyte and insist upon their fulfillment as part of his preparation for baptism. Today, in ancient times, the first scrutiny or examination took place and the "Table of the Ten Commandments" was officially given them. For us it is a good opportunity to receive afresh God's law from the Church.

The Mass formulary recounts two episodes bearing on the theme, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New. a) In spirit we stand before Mt. Sinai. It is awe-inspiring. The Israelites stand gathered together, while amid thunder and lightning God promulgates His commandments. Trembling with fear they beg Moses to act as mediator.

What does this event teach us? "Reverence is the fulcrum of the world." Lack of reverence is a major reason for the widespread, frivolous transgression of the divine law today. Be-

fore the altar resolve firmly to observe God's commandments perfectly.

b) The Lesson begins with the fourth Commandment, because Jesus in the Gospel upbraids the Pharisees for perverting God's law on the honor due to parents. Here then is our lawgiver, Christ. Full of gentleness He stands before us, addressing us not in lightning or thunder but in understanding and love. He does not intend to proclaim new commandments, but He does cast the old ones in a new form; and we are to keep them in spirit and in truth. He is not satisfied with mere external deeds, external compliance; He insists upon the spirit of the commandment, legislates upon the inward attitude of the human will. In drastic contrast He shows how sin is committed by desire long before it is consummated in act. The outward deed adds little.

Our "spiritualizing" the commandments must go even a step farther, for in addition to obeying His commandments, our Savior asks that we love them. As good children do not wait to be told what their parents want them to do, but read their desires in their faces, so we as God's children should joyfully seek out God's holy will.

In a very true sense, however, Christ does give us a new commandment—love, that love of God and neighbor which St. Paul put before us at Quinquagesima as our principal Lenten resolution. Love is the quintessence of all precepts and ordinances, upon this commandment depend the whole Law and the prophets. Understanding Christ's parable that shifts the morality of an act from the external deed to the internal disposition is most important for our Easter renewal. We must abandon a mere legalistic approach to religion and sanctify our heart. Our heart must not be a nest of serpents or a cage of beasts, but a sacred place, a temple of God where the Holy Trinity dwells.

c) A final reflection. Today the first scrutiny took place in the ancient catechumenate. The assembled faithful passed judgment on whether the applicants were worthy to receive holy

baptism. Our case is very similar, we are catechumens for heaven. For us death will be the baptism that admits us into the Church triumphant. Today the saints, heaven's citizens, are holding council, as it were, to see if we are sufficiently mature to enter the eternal sanctuary.

As we say the Confiteor at the foot of the altar, we have a good opportunity to realize what this heavenly scrutiny means. Upon the throne sits the eternal Bishop, surrounded by His saints. Mary, Michael, the apostles, and all the other saints accuse me of transgressing the commandments. I am overcome by shame, *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* But the heavenly congregation does not condemn me, rather intercedes for me. Let us regard Lent as our catechumenate in preparation for heaven. At Easter I must be ready to enter the community of heaven's citizens.

3. **Psalm 15. The Lord is My Portion.** In the literal sense this psalm is a Jewish priest's prayer of thanks for his happy lot of being a minister in Yahweh's temple. In addition the psalm has a Messianic message; in it Christ speaks and in it His resurrection is foretold. Pray this psalm in gratitude for the happiness of being a child of God. Others have earthly possessions, you possess God.

Keep me, O God, for in You I take refuge;
I say to the Lord, "My Lord are You.
Apart from You I have no good."
How wonderfully has He made me cherish
the holy ones who are in His land!
They multiply their sorrows
who court other gods.
Blood libations to them I will not pour out,
nor will I take their names upon my lips.
O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup,
You it is who hold fast my lot.
For me the measuring lines have fallen on pleasant sites;
fair to me indeed is my inheritance.

I bless the Lord who counsels me;
even in the night my heart exhorts me.
I set the Lord ever before me;

with Him at my right
hand I shall not
be disturbed.
Therefore my heart is
glad and my soul
rejoices,
my body, too, abides
in confidence;
Because You will not
abandon my soul to
the nether world,
nor will You suffer
Your faithful one
to undergo cor-
ruption.
You will show me the
path to life,
fullness of joys in
Your presence,
the delights at Your
right hand for-
ever.

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at Sts. Cosmas and Damian

Christ is the Physician, the house of God is the hospital, and the Church the divinely instituted clinic for healing souls.

All the psalms are prayers of the Church, but Psalm 15 in a special way portrays her spiritual nature. Ancient representations show the Church as a Virgin-bride of Christ the King, clothed in queenly garments. The chalice of Christ's blood is her "inheritance" from the Lord (Ps. 15). The *crux gemmata* with laurel wreath symbolizes Christ's triumph over death and hell. Resurrection is indicated by the phoenix perched on the empty sepulcher. The sacred writings, sources of faith, are always very close.

Today, the midpoint of Lent, was celebrated with a somewhat more joyous spirit in ancient times. In the midst of Lent's austerity a welcome breathing-space was provided. In part this joyful mood carries over to the coming Sunday (Laetare). Therefore, today's Mass is not, as on other Thursdays, penitential in nature. With noticeable festivity Christendom is conducted to the church of the illustrious and holy doctors and wonder-workers, Cosmas and Damian.

1. **Station.** The stational saints were natives of the East. They were saintly doctors who used their art only to promote the good of souls. Loyal to Christ's example, they healed sick bodies in order to be able to heal sick souls more easily. Under Byzantine influence the veneration of Saints Cosmas and Damian soon spread to Rome and a church was dedicated to them by Pope Felix IV (526-530). In this church the solemn stational service has taken place since the seventh century.

We can still see the splendid mosaic executed by Pope Felix IV in the arch of the apse (the drawing below was inspired by this mosaic). In the center stands the lofty figure of the glorified Redeemer upon the clouds; His right hand is lifted, and the scroll of the Scriptures is in His left. On the flowered ground beneath Him Peter and Paul conduct the two holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian, who as doctors carry a phial of medicine, to the heavenly Ruler. (Note the theology underneath: even foreign saints are introduced into the heavenly kingdom by the two masters of the Roman Church.)—In front of this magnificent mosaic many generations have celebrated today's liturgy; in spirit let us join them.

2. **Holy Mass (Salus Populi).** The Mass (with chants the same as on the 19th Sunday after Pentecost) is strongly influenced by the stational theme. The key word *salus* — health, salvation — appears repeatedly. At the very beginning Christ introduces Himself saying, "I am the salvation (*salus*) of the people! In whatever affliction they appeal to Me, I will hear them." It is the divine Physician's invitation to sick mankind. He does not delay in prescribing the necessary medicine and diet, "Hear My law" (Ps. 77).

All three Orations allude to the stational saints, the only such case in the temporal cycle (see Sexagesima Sunday). The *Collect* has the character of a feast rather than of a penitential Mass (*Magnificet*). The *Lesson*, from the prophet Jeremias, is a surprise sermon on the house of God. Probably the entire Mass was designed as a formulary for the dedication of the edifice as a stational church. A blind confidence in God's house is justified only when we fulfill His commandments, especially the one on love of neighbor. Then His gracious Presence will be ours, the *Dominus vobiscum* will be an immediate reality.

3. Health, the Keyword to Today's Liturgy.

Christ is our divine Physician.

The Church is a spiritual clinic.

The season of Lent is the ideal time for spiritual recuperation.

a) Christ is "the Savior of the World," yet we do not realize that the word "Savior" means "healer." This was Christ's great mission, to heal sick souls. Since the deadly bite of the serpent in paradise, men's souls have been sick — yes,

marked with the sign of death. In the fullness of time the divine Physician Jesus Christ came to heal them. But first He had to prove that He really could heal spiritual disorders. Therefore He began by restoring sick bodies to health. In His earthly life He healed many sick bodies solely for the purpose of proving that He could heal sick souls.

The Gospel describes a day of cures, a good figure of what Christ wishes to accomplish in His Church. He enters Peter's house (the Church) and heals his mother-in-law (another figure of the Church) who immediately rises and serves Him and His disciples by preparing a meal (the Eucharist). "When the sun had set" (after His death), all the sick come to Peter's house, the Church, to regain their health. And the mystical Christ heals them all.

Look courageously into the Lord's face today and say: You are my Physician. Cut, burn, operate on me! I can stand it. Only heal me, make me well for eternal life.

b) Before leaving the world our Savior established a clinic, the Church, whose main task was to heal sick souls. The Church is a great spiritual sanatorium. All the practices and ordinances of the Church have as their ultimate purpose to heal men and to keep them healthy. Think of the sacraments, baptism, penance, extreme unction. Think in particular of the medicinal power of the holy Eucharist. Yes, the twofold purpose of the Eucharist is to nourish and to heal. Nourishment to build divine life, medicine to overcome the diseases ravaging the soul!

To our great detriment we have practically forgotten the latter significance of the Eucharist. We keep believing that Communion is only for saints, a reward for virtue. The time of Mass is the heavenly Physician's normal office hours. Only the real Christian can say and judge how much doctrine, direction, grace, and stimulation a Mass can give, or how our fickle souls are put aright, strengthened, and steeled in virtue.

c) "See, now is the time of grace, *now is the day of healing*." With these words the Church introduced the season of

Lent. Lent is a time devoted exclusively to healing souls. I should like to compare it to a "health cure." Just as people seek out a spa in summer and devote the time completely to bodily recuperation, so Lent is the time for spiritual recovery.

The soul must now become well and strong again. The Lenten exercises constitute the prescribed diet. Daily Mass with frequent Communion is the invigorating and healing bath from which the soul goes forth with new vitality. There are many other points of comparison between Lent and physical recovery. Let us make the best possible use of this important period. Let us be cooperative and obedient patients.

From today's liturgy we will take with us into daily life this joyous conviction: we have a Healer who wishes to heal our infirmities; we have a clinic providing all the means needed to restore our health; we have a medicine which infallibly produces its effect if we use it as prescribed.

FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Lawrence in Lucina

Christ, the second Moses, provides life-giving water in baptism and the Eucharist.

Another ancient Mass of highest calibre, bringing the glad tidings of Christ to both the catechumens and the faithful! Throughout the day we remain close to Jacob's well, meditating on the discourse between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

Key sentences in the day's liturgy: "The water that I will give, if anyone drinks it, he shall never thirst again" (Ben. Ant.). "Lord, I see, You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain" (Magn. Ant.).

1. Stational Theme. For the second time in Lent the stational saint is Lawrence, the patron of catechumens, although the edifice itself is different. St. Lawrence in Lucina is one of the oldest titular churches in Rome, founded originally by a certain Christian woman named Lucina, perhaps in the third century. On the site Pope Sixtus III (432-440) built a large

basilica and dedicated it to St. Lawrence. Since most ancient times a considerable part of the grill upon which its patron suffered has been preserved in this church.

A famous fountain near the station may have occasioned the two "water lessons"; or the opposite may have been true, viz., the station was chosen in order to present these readings on baptism to the catechumens with evident allusion to the fountain in their midst. According to tradition the name of the Samaritan was Photina, in Latin Lucina (the light-giver).

2. Holy Mass (Fac mecum). Only John will address us in the Gospel from now on. The beloved disciple gives us a clearer insight into the suffering soul of Jesus than do the other evangelists. The theme of suffering will swell in intensity day by day. Today's Mass formulary, written primarily for the catechumens, revealed to them the meaning of baptism by recounting two episodes from the Bible.

The *Lesson.* Moses leads the Israelites, dying of thirst, through the desert. Yahweh appears in His glory and bids Moses to strike the rock with his staff. Water flows out in sufficient abundance to meet all needs.

The *Gospel.* Christ, the new Moses, strikes the rock with the staff of His Cross. St. Paul calls Him the Rock that once accompanied the Jews, the Rock that now gives the catechumens the living waters of baptism and therewith life eternal.

Christ speaks to the Samaritan woman about this water, living water, that becomes a fount of eternal life for the catechumens at baptism. The faithful already possess it. To them it flows daily in the Eucharist.

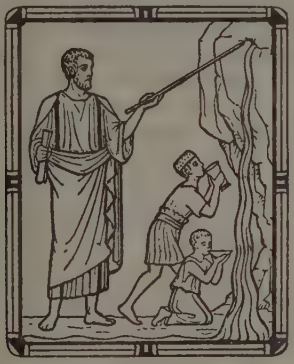
Upon approaching the altar the catechumens beg for the "sign (*signum*) of God's goodness," that is, the stamp of the Cross, the inextinguishable mark of baptism (*Intr.*). With the appearance of this sign, the enemies of salvation flee. The Introit psalm is a fervent, confident prayer that fits well upon the lips of catechumens, penitents, and faithful. The *Collect* is one of those typical Lenten prayers which show the spirit and meaning of fasting, "That we may refrain from sin even as we forego bodily nourishment." Moved by the two Readings the catechumens and penitents feel themselves invigorated by the refreshing waters of salvation.

The *Offertory* is subjoined to the last words of the *Gospel*. The Samaritans professed their belief in Jesus as "Savior of the world," and we in the Offertory approach Him singing, "My King and my God." That we really find Christ's promised water in the Eucharist is confirmed by the *Communion* chant, "This water becomes a living fountain that gushes into eternal life." The *Postcommunion* is an abbreviated Our Father — forgive us our sins, Thy kingdom come!

3. The Living Fountain. The two Readings belong to the oldest strata of the liturgy. Supporting this statement is the fact that among the pictures in the catacombs the two Biblical figures, Moses striking water from the rock and the Samaritan woman, appear repeatedly. Therefore, we must not confine the symbolism of water to the catechumens and baptism. In the Bible and in the liturgy water is a common symbol for the life of grace; consequently it has rich meaning for all who open their souls to the holy springtime of Lent. Let us analyze the Biblical accounts and assimilate their central message.

a) Suffering, hungry, and murmuring, the Israelites represent the soul of man. In Christ the human soul has indeed been delivered from Egypt, has passed through the Red Sea;

then it continues its pilgrimage through the desert of life, accompanied by the cloud of divine Providence, provided with the manna of the Eucharist, and guided by a new Moses.



Yet it often acts in a childish way, becomes confused, discontent and wants to return to Egypt, its old nature. How often the soul utters the cry: I can go no further, I give up! Then, as from a rock, Christ gushes out the water of strength and grace to revive its failing spirit. Lord, lift me up, that I may not faint on the road, that I may see the Promised Land. The rock in the desert, which Moses struck with his staff, is a symbol of the Eucharist; now in Lent it brings us refreshment and spiritual courage.

b) The poor sinner from Samaria is — my soul. Christ sits wearily at Jacob's well; He seems to be resting. Actually He is watching for me, the Samaritan woman. The Mass is Jacob's well; there Jesus is waiting, every day. Now He speaks to me. How well He knows my weaknesses. When I evade His gentle hints, He tries again. He will not let me go. Christ is pursuing a straying human soul; no one is too insignificant.

In catacomb art Moses frequently appears as Peter. With Christ's earthly representative striking the rock, the typical significance of the Old Testament event (baptism) is brought out very vividly.

And He adjusts His approach according to each one's peculiar nature. He overtakes me! He tells me of the wholesome water that He gives, water that will never leave me thirsty. The world's pleasures are brackish, they do not satisfy, while the waters of Christ's graces do quench the spirit's longing. The fountain spurting forth eternal life is the Eucharist.

How much I can learn from one brief conversation with Him! He tells me that the true worshiper may offer sacrifice anywhere. Do I properly esteem this privilege of having the holy Sacrifice of Mass daily, and in all places? He teaches me to worship in spirit and in truth. I will, therefore, ennoble my service to His honor. Divine worship should be free of superstition and petty, egoistic requests. Dignity must characterize worship tendered to a supreme Being. The sinful woman of Samaria did not merely become a disciple, but an apostle; she atoned for her sins by bringing others to the feet of the Messiah. A splendid type of penance.

Noverim me, noverim te ("O that I understood myself, that I understood You!"). These words, ascribed to St. Augustine, are applicable here. Lent should teach me two things, the poverty of human nature and the redemptive power of Christ. The one will make me humble, the other confident.

4. Psalm 16. God helps those who love Him. The sources tell us that Psalm 16 is today's Communion psalm, sung to the antiphon (taken from the Gospel) given in the Missal. The psalm came as a cry to God from David's lips when persecuted, tried, and tempted. Because St. Lawrence prayed this psalm while suffering on the grill, it was an appropriate choice for his stational service. A division into three strophes is justified by the psalmist's threefold request for deliverance because of 1. his innocence (1-5), 2. his enemies' malice (6-12), 3. the apparent injustices perpetrated on earth (13-15).

1 Hear, O Lord, a just suit;
attend to my outcry;
hearken to my prayer from lips without deceit.
2 From You let my judgment come;
Your eyes behold what is right.

3 Though You test my heart, searching it in the night,
though You try me with fire, You shall find no malice
in me.
4 My mouth has not transgressed after the manner of man;
according to the words of Your lips I have kept the
ways of the law.
5 My steps have been steadfast in Your paths,
my feet have not faltered.

6 I call upon You, for You will answer me, O God;
incline Your ear to me; hear my word.
7 Show Your wondrous kindness,
O savior of those who flee
from their foes to refuge at Your right hand.
8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
hide me in the shadow of Your wings
9 from the wicked who use violence against me.
My ravenous enemies beset me;
10 they shut up their cruel hearts,
their mouths speak proudly.
11 Their steps even now surround me;
crouching to the ground, they fix their gaze,
12 Like lions hungry for prey,
like young lions lurking in hiding.

13 Rise, O Lord, confront them and cast them down;
rescue me by Your sword from the wicked,

Taking the day's stational saint as an example, the picture gives a full view of what martyrdom involves. In the words of the psalm, St. Lawrence was "tried with fire," his heart "searched in the dark night" of suffering. The laurel wreath from the hand of God in reward for spiritual victory and peacocks with clusters of grapes are common themes in ancient Christian art.

14 by Your hand, O Lord, from mortal men;
From mortal men whose portion in life is in this world,
where with Your treasures You fill their bellies.
Their sons are enriched
and bequeath their abundance to their little ones.
15 But I in justice shall behold Your face;
on waking, I shall be content in Your presence.

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Susanna

Christ, the Friend of sinners

We stand in the ranks of the penitents. The soul, an adulteress before God (every sin is a breach of loyalty on the part of God's bride), is pardoned by Christ.

The key songs of the day, "Jesus stooped down and began writing on the ground: If anyone is without sin, let him cast a stone at her" (Ben. Ant.). "Has no one condemned you, woman? No one, Lord! Neither will I condemn you; but do not sin again!" (Magn. Ant.).

Thus throughout the day we keep in mind the episode of the adulteress. There are no loose ends to today's liturgy.

1. Stational Theme. Of Susanna, our stational saint, the Martyrology says on August 11: "In Rome the holy virgin Susanna. She belonged to a noble family and was the niece of the saintly Pope Cajus. At the time of Diocletian she won the palm." The Breviary adds the reason for her martyrdom, "She was beheaded because she refused to give her hand in marriage to Galerius Maximus, the son of the Emperor Diocletian; previously she had taken the vow of perpetual virginity."

The stational church is a very old temple, built perhaps in the third century; the present structure, however, is the result of subsequent renovations. In addition to the holy martyr Susanna, the Susanna of the Old Testament was honored in this church.

2. Holy Mass (Verba mea). Two episodes with a similar

theme form the nucleus of today's magnificently constructed Mass. Its basic structure parallels that of last Saturday. Note the excellent artistic balance between the Lesson concerning chaste Susanna and the pericope on the adulteress—two women, the innocent one is condemned, the guilty one is acquitted! In each account there are three centers of action, viz., a woman accused of adultery, malicious judges, a savior. The climax comes in Christ's acquittal.

How great our Savior shows Himself! The Old Testament could at best preserve the innocent from undeserved death; the New Testament grants pardon to the guilty. The Old Testament administered the Law; the New gives grace and forgiveness. Today my soul is the adulteress before God. It receives pardon from Christ (*Comm.*). The chants reflect the spirit of the Mass action.

Introit: in search of pardon and grace, I, like the adulteress, approach my "king and God early in the morning." *Lesson*: the condemnation and acquittal of the chaste Susanna serves as a good background for the Gospel. This highly dramatic Old Testament story was a favorite among the ancient Christians; we find it depicted repeatedly in the catacombs. Susanna symbolized the Church, persecuted by Jew and Gentile and slandered,

The design. The Hebrew word for lily is shushannah. The Susanna in today's Lesson resembled a lily between two poisonous snakes. Her defender, Daniel, is an Old Testament type of Christ; he is here represented as a staff (cf. Gradual: "Your staff gives me courage"). My soul should be bound to Christ as the lily is bound to the staff (note small cross). From the Cross comes strength and the grace of innocence, while lightning smites God's enemies.

yet always standing under God's protection. She also was a figure of the soul before the eternal Judge; the devil brings accusations, but the divine Daniel (Christ) comes to the rescue.

The *Gradual* seems to echo the Lesson, "Though I am forced to walk through a veritable hell of persecution and slander, or even the guilt of sin, I will fear nothing because my good Shepherd leads me." The *Gospel* is a message of comfort for all sinners. Christ does not condemn me. Does He take sin lightly? No. What sin meant to Him He showed by His sacred passion — and even now in the Mass. He died for sin, but to the sinner He is mild and kind. He is the great Friend of sinners, He makes only *one* condition, "Sin no more!"

This wish becomes our song at the *Offertory*; the procession itself is a figure of the "straight and narrow road" that leads to life. A deep impression must have been made by the antiphon repeated again and again, "Let no sin have dominion over me!" Persistence in sin is most surely the greatest of evils. Individual sinful acts are quickly forgotten and forgiven, but habits of sin are often fatal.

In accord with the nature of today's sacramental drama, the *Secret* begs for purification and preservation from all evil. Like last Saturday the *Communion* shows the Mass as a reconciliation banquet for the penitent soul who has returned home (these two Masses have many points of similarity). The *Postcommunion* makes an unusual request: we beg that we may be counted as members of Christ whose Body and Blood we have just received. It is a reminder of how clearly the Eucharist is related to the mystical Body.

3. I, an Adulteress? Today I will try to plumb the message that the stories of Susanna and the woman taken in adultery have for me.

a) Susanna. Few accounts in Holy Scripture capture our sympathy so quickly and completely. The charming story has hardly begun and this noble woman has become for us a model of honorable modesty. Spontaneously we become enraged at her monstrous judges; how can there be such people! "Their

hearts are a brood of serpents." With satisfaction we see the two old, lustful liars hurried away to just punishment. But the Church wants you to scrutinize your own heart! Are you so unlike Susanna's accusers? How miserable is man's fallen nature, yet Christ is planning to die for you and for others like yourself.

b) To an even greater degree we are moved by the Gospel story. Our blessed Savior is attending the Feast of Tabernacles. Unexpectedly the Pharisees approach with a woman caught in the act of adultery. We do not know the circumstances, we will make no judgment on the case. Perhaps the woman had sinned through weakness. Nevertheless, adultery is a great sin; the woman had lost her honor, broken her faith. The penalty prescribed by Mosaic law was death.

But the Pharisees were utterly perverse. Their corrupt hearts enjoyed the agony of their victim, they dragged her along with them and planned to use her sin as a trap for the Savior. Note Christ's majestic reserve. They ask Him to judge the case. He writes in the sand, for He will have nothing to do with their accusations. Let us follow His example and refrain from judging others, let us pass sentence on no one; let us be charitable in evaluating our neighbor's actions. But the Pharisees keep insisting. Jesus rises and speaks — the "verdict of Solomon!" "Let him who is without sin . . . "

What He meant was this: of course, according to ancient Mosaic law, she should die, but that same Law requires those who execute the sentence to be free of guilt themselves. For this turn the Pharisees were unprepared. In the presence of the Just Man their consciences reawaken. They fear the Almighty will reveal their sins. Jesus bends down again — He takes no pleasure in their embarrassment, He gives them an opportunity to depart without loss of face. One after the other, they leave. A pause, breathless silence. Jesus, the woman, and the people remain. Jesus looks up. "Has no one condemned you?," He asks. "No one, Lord!" "Neither will I condemn you — sin no more."

We drop to our knees and adore the holy words of Christ. What a comforting message for any sinner, one which soothes a sore heart like balm. He does not condemn me.

4. Psalm 17. A Song of Thanks. Because the Communion antiphon given in the missal is culled from the Gospel, it is impossible to deduce from today's Mass text that the Psalm 17 was sung as the Communion processional. Psalm 17, one of the finest in the psalter, was composed by David at the end of his long career as a poem of grateful praise to God who had aided him in all his struggles and had given him final victory over all his enemies.

Because of its length we must limit our observations to the magnificent thunderstorm theophany. This passage is especially applicable to today's holy Mass in which Susanna and the adulteress are rescued from great danger. The length of the psalm prevents us from citing it in translation. It certainly deserves careful study.

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Easter is coming! With childlike joy the Church begins to count the days. Just as on the third Sunday of Advent we felt the thrill and happiness of Christmas, so now we anticipate the joy of Easter. Herein lies the whole significance of Laetare Sunday. It brings to the catechumens a foretaste of the good

"My God, my Rock of refuge!" The artist portrays this idea by the citadel in the design. Below the storm rages. Through the dark clouds God extends His hand to save His anointed ones (represented by the chi-rho) from a deluge of trials and temptations.

things they will receive at Easter; e.g., the grace of divine sonship, a new spiritual mother in holy Church, the Eucharist as the true manna. And we, the faithful, awaken in our breasts a new consciousness of these tremendous blessings.

There exists a certain similarity between this Sunday and the second Sunday of Lent (just as the first and third show certain affinities). Two weeks ago the transfiguration of Christ was an anticipation of Easter glory, and during the ensuing days the ferial Masses emphasized the theme of suffering. A similar stress on suffering is noticeable during the coming week. As a title for the liturgy of Lent's fourth week we suggest, "The Sufferings of Christ and Baptism."

The dominant theme. *Sunday*: holy spring. *Monday*: the Jews destroy the Temple, Christ. *Tuesday*: Moses and Jesus. *Wednesday*: our Savior gives sight to the blind. *Thursday and Friday*: Christ awakens the catechumens and penitents from spiritual death. *Saturday*: the Light of the world leads us to fountains of waters.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Station at Holy Cross in Jerusalem

Jerusalem, our Mother

Easter will soon be here! That is the new theme which permeates and dominates this Sunday's liturgy. From it all other motifs and topics take their inspiration. Christ, the new Moses, provides heavenly manna, the Eucharist, for His disciples. He leads them to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church, and makes them God's free children.

1. A Day of Joy. This Sunday has a unique distinction in the Church year — a day of joy in the season of penance and sorrow! The priest may wear a rose-colored chasuble, the organ may play, deacon and subdeacon are clothed in festive vestments. All the Mass texts ring with joy; the entrance song is a joyous shout, "Laetare — rejoice!" The Church has the following reasons for the happiness in her soul.

a) In the oldest period the Lenten fast at Rome did not

begin until Monday of the third week preceding Easter; today then was a kind of Mardi Gras. Later, when the observance was extended to forty days, this Sunday became Mid-Lent — again reason for a pause and relaxation.

b) The ancient Church rejoiced in her catechumens, whose rebirth was close at hand. She was filled with maternal joy at the prospect of a large family. It is this spirit which gives a joyful coloring to all the older liturgy of Lent.

c) Today's celebration is a preview of Easter, we can not quell our joyous expectation as we anticipate the sacred feast. The Gospel says, emphatically: "Easter is near!"

d) This Sunday has also a Eucharistic character — an ancient Corpus Christi. Christ is about to establish His family; through blood and sweat He obtains our daily Bread, the fruit of His suffering. The Gospel makes this clear. Christ is the new Moses who in the desert of life gives us heavenly manna.

e) Finally, this Sunday is a nature feast. It is springtime and we are happy over the resurrection of nature. The heavenly Father is about to effect the multiplication of bread upon our

Pictured are the day's leading thoughts. We see the Holy City Jerusalem with gates and turrets, and a woman seated at the entrance dressed in priestly and royal apparel. Both woman and city are symbols of Holy Church. In today's liturgy the Church is spoken of as a city and as a mother. Children surround her, i.e., catechumens and the baptized. They are bringing roses; and their mother is not without a return gift. From her breast there beams like a sun a holy symbol: two fish and a basket with bread — the holy Eucharist. From holy Mother Church we receive the light of faith and the Bread of heaven.

fields. In the liturgy, however, springtime in nature is merely a figure of the *holy spring* that with Easter comes into the land of the baptized. The sign of the Church's *ver sacrum* is the rose, the *golden rose* blessed today by the Holy Father. Surely there are many and good reasons for the joy surging through Christendom today.

2. Stational Theme. An intelligent appreciation of today's liturgy must take into account the stational church, "Holy Cross at Jerusalem" (in ancient times called simply "Jerusalem"). In the mind of the Christians at Rome, this church symbolized the Messianic and heavenly Jerusalem. Today the catechumens were led solemnly, as it were, into the Jerusalem of Christianity.

The station exercised a profound influence upon the formation of the Mass formulary. All the chants are concerned with Jerusalem. The key psalm (121), "I rejoiced because they said to me, 'We will go up to the house of the Lord!'," expressed well the jubilant spirit of catechumens and Christians. With the two wives of Abraham as types, the Epistle compares the Church with the synagogue, the heavenly Jerusalem with the Jewish Jerusalem. The station reminds Christians and catechumens that in Holy Church they have a good mother. Over the portal of our parish church, let us imagine these words in golden letters, "Jerusalem, our Mother!"

3. Holy Mass (Laetare). Clear and loud like a bugle call, the *Introit* heralds its message to rejoice because the "mourning" of Lent will soon be over. New children will soon be born (through baptism) and nourished "at the breast of Mother Church" (the Eucharist). Psalm 121 is an excellent song for a procession approaching the altar, its sentiments will be on the lips of the white-robed catechumens on Holy Saturday, and on ours when at death we pass into the heavenly Jerusalem.

This Sunday is like breathing space in life's Lent, and a "consoling" word (*Coll.*) is very welcome. In the mystic types of Abraham's two wives, Sara and Agar, the Church wishes to show us how our good fortune as Christians shines even

brighter when contrasted with Israel's lot. We are God's free sons, heirs of heaven. Jerusalem is our mother, we her children, to Christ we owe this heritage, this freedom! (*Epistle*). The *Gradual* is another joyful song to our mother who acts as a protecting wall in all our troubles.

In sign and symbol the *Gospel* readies us for the Eucharistic sacrifice, "Now the Pasch is near at hand" — for every Mass is Easter. For us, the assembled congregation, Christ will work the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (two primary symbols of the Eucharist) and give us a foretaste of Easter. An occasion to thank God, the kind Giver of the "sweet" bread which is Christ, comes at the *Offertory* (the full text also mentions Jerusalem).

On the way to the sacrificial banquet we sing a third time Psalm 121, the pilgrim's song of longing for the Messianic and heavenly Jerusalem (*Comm.*). The verse, "There stand the chairs of judgment, and the throne of the house of David," catches our attention because David's throne is the altar upon which Christ, his Son and King, is now immolated. The *Postcommunion* is a genuine Corpus Christi prayer since it enjoins reverence for the holy Eucharist and inculcates its frequent reception.

4. The Golden Rose. It may perhaps seem strange to find the Church in a mood so devoid of sadness and penance during this season of austerity and mortification. Nevertheless today, the fourth Sunday of Lent, the last before Passiontide, she is ringingly jubilant. "Laetare," as the Sunday is called, means "rejoice." Nor is this in any way unnatural because joy and sorrow so often are very close together in the human heart! How frequently joy is born of suffering, how frequently bitter grief crushes out joy! Think, for example, of a mother's pain and happiness, of her joys and worries.

This intricate rhythm of suffering and joy is pointed out for us today by the symbol of the rose. In ancient times Christians brought roses for each other as gifts. Today the Pope blesses the golden rose and delivers a discourse on its symbolism.

a) First of all, I see in the rose a beautiful indication of

the closeness between joy and suffering; for with roses come thorns. Should it not fill us with wonder that nature adds thorns to the most beautiful flower of all, the queen of flowers? Do not overlook the great lesson God is hereby teaching.

b) The rosebush is a beautiful representation for the Easter cycle with its two extremes, sorrow over sin and fervent paschal joy. First the thorns grow, then the roses bloom. First we must pass through the thorny period of Lent, first we must hear that sin has banished us to a thorny earth; then, at Easter, the Church opens for us the door of paradise, lush with roses.

c) It was the same for our blessed Savior whose life was very much like the rose. His public career was a thorny bush; yes, in His passion a pricking, piercing wreath was entwined about His sacred head. Along the trunk of the Cross this thornbush grew and its buds did not break open before the stone was rolled back. But suffering was not an end in itself; for Jesus it was only the means of redemption, the sharp point to lance the swell of mankind's guilt, the dark gate to resurrection — His own and that of all God's children. The rosebush, then, tells us of our Savior's passion and glory.

d) Christ leads, we follow. Christ first, Christians immediately after. Human life is a thorny bush climbing up the tree of the Cross. Self-denial is one sharp thorn, taking up your cross, i.e., embracing all the sorrows and duties and burdens of life, is another. But God promises you roses in return, "Whoever loses his life on earth, will find true, divine life."

The rose is the harbinger of holy spring which now has come to our souls. As springtime in nature awakens life, so the Church's spring awakens a God-filled life of grace in all Christ's members. Catechumens, penitents, and faithful are desiring "life in abundance." And its realization brings unspeakable joy!

5. Moses. Today the Church introduces the sixth and last of the patriarchs, Moses. We need not hesitate in ranking him with the greatest men of all times. Friend of God, lawgiver, and leader of the Jews through the desert, he stands as

a type of Christ. Particularly today, the Sunday of the multiplication of the loaves, does Moses prefigure the Giver of heavenly manna. Throughout the coming week the Church wishes us to keep in mind the life and work of this great patriarch.

The second nocturn of Matins contains a sermon on fasting by the holy doctor, St. Basil.

"We know that Moses ascended the mountain (Sinai) fasting. For had he not been fortified by fasting, he would never have dared to approach its smoking summit. Because he had fasted, he received the tables of the law written by the finger of God. Fasting, therefore, made possible the creation of the Old Law upon the mountain; but gluttony on the plain below seduced the people to the worship of idols.

"The labor and persevering effort of forty days, during which the servant of God fasted and prayed, was rendered void by a single act of immoderation on the part of the people. How easy it is to see, if the two are compared, that fasting leads to God and gluttony to the loss of salvation.

"Fasting produces men of God, it strengthens and invigorates the strong. Fasting confers wisdom upon the lawgiver; it is excellent protection for the soul. It banishes temptations, arms the pious, supports the temperate. By fasting soldiers become brave, and peacemakers gain their ends. It perfects the priest, for he is forbidden to approach the altar except when fasting."

Moses' significance in the liturgy of Lent can be seen from the fact that he is the object of fifteen responsories this week. He was called by God to be the savior, leader, provider and teacher of the Chosen People. After many rebuffs from Pharao, he led his people out of bondage on the night of the Passover. Under his direction they slaughtered and ate the paschal lamb. With them he passed dry-shod through the Red Sea; in the desert he provided manna, obtained the law and the commandments upon Sinai, spoke most intimately with God, mediated and interceded for his people. Their shortcomings he bore with incomparable patience. On all these points Moses prefigured Christ.

Sent by the Father into the world, Christ wrestled with hell's pharao, led His people out of Egypt on Passover night, and offered Himself as the paschal lamb to be immolated and consumed by all. He guides His people through the Red Sea of baptism after He Himself blazed the way through the Red Sea of suffering. And now He accompanies us through life's desert, feeds us with manna, and gives us the fountain of the Eucharist from which to drink. And with ineffable patience He leads us to the Promised Land of heaven.

Christians, Easter is near! The divine Moses is leading us out of Egypt.

MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at the Four Holy Crowned Martyrs

Cross and resurrection

The Passover is approaching. The Jews are about to destroy the temple of Christ's body, but He predicts His resurrection. The Church is our true mother, she wants us to enjoy the fullness of life.

The key chants at sunrise and sunset: " 'Away with these things,' the Lord says, 'and do not make My Father's house a market place' " (Ben. Ant.). " 'Destroy this temple,' the Lord says, 'and I will rebuild it in three days.' He meant, however, the temple of His body." (Magn. Ant.). In these two chants the main purposes of Lent are summarized admirably. The first points out the task of spiritual purification, the second makes us reflect upon the Cross and resurrection.

In the third century the Easter fast at Rome began on this day; accordingly it lasted only three weeks. This is clear from the liturgy, for with today the theme of suffering receives greater emphasis. Noticeable too is a change in approach; from now on all the Gospels (except Thursday's) are from John, who describes the inner nature of our Lord's passion, viz., the battle of darkness against light. This conflict is the theme of the whole fourth Gospel. "The light shines in the darkness; and

the darkness grasped it not"—in fact, the darkness openly resisted and defied the Light. John will treat this in detail on the coming days.

The Lesson usually presents an Old Testament figure portraying the suffering Savior. Even the chants show the change clearly. During the past weeks the faithful (or catechumens and penitents) poured out their souls in sorrow for sin, in longing and in joy, but now it is Christ who is suffering and lamenting.

Today's Mass leaves the impression that its salient features were borrowed from yesterday's formulary. In the Epistle two women again play major roles, with only one a true mother (the Church). And as the Gospel begins, our thoughts are directed forward to the passion, "The Pasch of the Jews was at hand."

1. **The station** is the Church of the Four Crowned Martyrs. Concerning these four saints the Roman Martyrology gives the following information on November 8: "At Rome, on the

The picture outlines the day's two dominant thoughts: Cross and resurrection. The black beams of the cross with the inscription, *Salvum me fac,* indicate the passion theme (the cleansing of the temple precipitated the crucifixion). The rebuilt and adorned temple in the center points to the resurrection that followed after three days (Gosp.). The four laurel wreaths represent the Four Crowned Martyrs (as well as our participation in Christ's resurrection and transfiguration). The exhortation *Jubilate Deo* is from the Offertory.

Via Lavicana, the day when the four holy martyrs, the brothers Severus, Severianus, Carpophorus, and Victorinus died. They were beaten to death with leaden rods under the Emperor Diocletian. Only after many years did their names become known, and then through divine revelation. Since no record existed previously, it had been decided to celebrate their annual feast under the title: The Four Holy Crowned Martyrs." In their church this circumlocution continued to be used even after their names became known.

The edifice in which their remains have been reposing under the altar since the time of Leo IV (847-855), is a very ancient titular church; in it the head of St. Sebastian is also preserved. In the course of time the building suffered many architectural changes, yet it ranks as "one of the most interesting and imposing of the old churches in the Eternal City. Its entire history can be ascertained from the architecture, on the basis of the numerous remains preserved within the church or forming part of the transept. It is an inspiring and holy place, one which stimulates the worshiper to piety and devotion. The atmosphere and whole arrangement is splendidly suited for liturgical solemnity."*

2. Holy Mass (Deus, in nomine tuo). After yesterday's high spirits the emotional duress expressed in today's chants strikes one immediately. While the *Introit* and *Gradual* are lamentations from the lips of Christ, the *Offertory* is a glad song of spiritual resurrection. This association of Cross and resurrection is also present in the *Gospel,* for the Lord speaks of the destruction and the rebuilding of the temple of His body.

Here lies a basic idea which aids greatly in understanding the liturgy. Cross and resurrection are our constant companions. Holy suffering—holy joy, the one supplements the other. In the coming weeks we will note the growing crescendo of suffering, while the joy of resurrection does not diminish.

The *Lesson* recounts the story of "Solomon's judgment" upon two women. As in yesterday's Epistle they represent the Church and the synagogue. Christ, the wise Solomon, gives

* Kirsch, *Die Stationskirchen des Missale Romanum,* p. 173f.

the definitive decision. He saves the child—the human soul—from unjust claimants and from death, and assigns it to its true mother, the Church. This decision will bring upon Him the hatred of the Jews, and finally death.

The liturgy places special emphasis upon the Gospel's opening words, "The Pasch of the Jews was at hand." Although historically it may have been the first Passover during Christ's public teaching, the liturgy abstracts from that consideration in order to direct our attention to the approach of Easter.

The pericope describes Jesus' first meeting with Pharisaic Judaism. Because He cleansed the temple, the high priests were offended and demanded evidence of His authority for such action. He replied by giving them a glimpse of His death and resurrection, "Destroy this temple. . . ." Thus at His very first encounter with official Judaism, He prophesied the final resolution of His mission in the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Jesus chose no disciples in Jerusalem, "He knew what was in man." The impression is given that the liturgy wishes to select all the passages from St. John's Gospel that show the development of Jewish hatred and the antagonism that finally precipitated the passion. Now, at the Sacrifice of holy Mass, "Jesus entrusts Himself to us" (in contrast to the Jews). At the *Communion* "The Song of the Sun" (Psalm 18) is sung to a penitential antiphon.

3. The Theme of Suffering. Lent (together with Easter) attains its highest meaning in *suffering with Christ.* Let us recall how we epitomized the season of spiritual renewal. First, the theme of battle. On Septuagesima we entered the arena to run the race and to fight. Christ and the devil were rivals, both in the citadel of the soul. We met the two warriors again on the first Sunday of Lent. The climax and decision came on the third Sunday when the strong one was defeated by One stronger.

The second theme, that of spring, was better integrated than the first. Lent and Easter constitute "holy spring" (*ver sacrum*),

in which the life of grace awakens anew. As early as Sexagesima this theme appeared in the Parable of the Sower. The ancient Church was very fond of this approach to Easter. With "holy spring" in mind she spoke of the catechumenate as the Church's new "crop." The climax to *ver sacrum* came with Rose Sunday.

At the present or third stage the Church gives Eastertide its loftiest meaning, viz., participating in the suffering and resurrection of Christ. Because we are members of the mystical Body, we must become one spiritual entity with Christ—upon earth through suffering, in heaven through bodily resurrection and transfiguration.

With these sentiments the Church advances toward Holy Week and Easter. Suffering and resurrection characterized the earthly career of Christ, suffering and resurrection must set the rhythm to the life journey of Christ's mystical Body. Through the centuries the Church must walk the way of the Cross; woe to her if she seeks other paths, for only through the Cross can she arrive at her goal, resurrection.

It is the same for the individual Christian. My soul too must lament and weep with her suffering Lord; at the same time she must rejoice over her interior resurrection. Yes, I am crucified and transfigured at the same time. "With Christ I am nailed to the cross, and I live!" Through physical and mental pain my soul can be transfigured and given part in Christ's resurrection.

To the degree the earthly temple of my body is demolished, a higher spiritual temple is erected in my soul; therefore, while the body trembles and laments, "O God, give me salvation for Your name's sake. Deliver me through Your power because strangers have risen up against me . . . ," in the Introit, the soul, transfigured by grace, prays, "Sing joyfully to God, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness," at the Offertory.

Do not fail to notice how the Church as a whole and Christians as individuals identify their suffering and their glory with the Mass. Through the Offertory offering of their sacrifices

they are raised up and, united with their Head, continue the holy Sacrifice. The formularies during the coming weeks make this application repeatedly.

A final observation, moralizing on the Mass text. The two women in the Lesson, as we noted above, represent the Church and the synagogue. But we may regard them as women vying for possession of our souls, the Church and the world. The one desires our life, the other our death. Look once again upon the face of your true Mother, the Church, and upon the cruel visage of your stepmother, the world. What would the Church not do to give you God-filled life and to preserve it! Think only of Lent with its liturgy, the finest spiritual education imaginable. How different the world's intentions, luring us on to destruction!

A second reflection on the Gospel. Now, in Lent, Christ wants to purify the temples of our souls, lest they become markets of selfishness and greed. Our souls should always be houses of prayer and altars of sacrifice. Putting the two thoughts together, we can say: Dame World wants to kill the soul by making it a den for thievery and sinful trafficking.

4. Christ, the Sun-hero and Bridegroom (Ps. 18). Few psalms are used more frequently in the liturgy than Psalm 18. Its two component parts are easily distinguishable, first a hymn to the sun, then a hymn praising the Torah. A possible connection between the two songs may be that the first is a parable about the sun, while the second provides an explanation and interpretation of the parable in relation to the Law.

The psalm is exceptionally good poetry. Dramatically the poet raises our eyes to heaven observing how it proclaims God's glory by night in the silent splendor of the stars, by day in the dazzling brightness of the sun. In never ending alternation day and night proclaim the praise of God and carry it to the very borders of creation.

But the poet's highest homage is reserved for the sun, the sky's most splendid ornament. Like a youthful, vigorous bridegroom the sun steps forth from his chamber at dawn, and proudly conscious of his strength, gaily trots over heaven's high course, spreading the blessings of his invigorating power in every direction.

Then the poet pivots his thoughts on another sun—and without transitional pause begins to praise the Law. While the liturgy of the Christmas season can apply to better use the first half of the song (Christ proceeding out of the canopy of eternal night), it is easier to appreciate and use the second part, the praise of the law, during Lent.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.
Day pours out the word to day,
and night to night imparts knowledge;
Not a word nor a discourse
whose voice is not heard;
Through all the earth their voice resounds,
and to the ends of the world, their message.

He has pitched a tent there for the sun,
which comes forth like the groom from his bridal chamber
and, like a giant, joyfully runs its course.
At one end of the heavens it comes forth,
and its course is to their other end;
nothing escapes its heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul;
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
The command of the Lord is clear,
enlightening the eye;
The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever;
The ordinances of the Lord are true,
all of them just;
They are more precious than gold,
than a heap of purest gold;
Sweeter also than syrup
or honey from the comb.

Though your servant is careful of them,
very diligent in keeping them,
Yet who can detect failings?
Cleanse me from my unknown faults!
From wanton sin especially, restrain Your servant;
let it not rule over me.
Then shall I be blameless and innocent
of serious sin.
Let the words of my mouth and the thought of my heart
find favor
before You, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Lawrence in Damaso

His hour had not yet come

The stress on suffering becomes more pronounced. Fully aware of His divinity, Christ, in the person of Moses, begs for His faithless people, and for their sake goes down to death.

Today at Matins the Church takes the words for the first responsory from the lips of her persecuted Lord, "Why do you seek to kill Me, One who spoke the truth to you? If I have spoken evil, give proof of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me? Many good works I have done in your presence. For which of these do you plan to kill Me?"

The antiphons at sunrise and sunset: "Why do you seek to kill Me, One who spoke the truth to you?" (Ben. Ant.). "No one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come" (Magn. Ant.).

During the whole day we will remain close to our Lord in His suffering.

1. Station at St. Lawrence in Damaso. Again we assemble in a church of St. Lawrence, the patron of catechumens. In the choir of the edifice one may see the dedicatory inscription of Pope Damasus (366-384), "To You, Christ, I, Damasus, consecrate this building. I was protected by the help of the martyr Lawrence." To the care of this church Pope Damasus entrusted the archives of the Roman See, where his father was engaged. Nothing of the original church remains, the new structure stands at some distance.

2. Holy Mass (Exaudi Deus). The Mass wells up from a soul deep in suffering, even though the chants of the sacrifice banquet bespeak confidence and trust. The Lessons of the Mass are not unrelated to the week's patriarch, Moses.

Already at the *Introit* the suffering Lord begins His laments. The *Lesson* is highly dramatic. The Jews are at Mt. Sinai, and Moses has been on the mountain forty days. Weary of waiting, the people make a golden god for themselves, dance about it and offer sacrifice. Moses comes down from the mountain and breaks the tables to show that their convenant with God has been broken. God is on the point of destroying the Israelites when Moses intercedes for them and by a most touching prayer obtains divine forgiveness.

By this action Moses becomes a pattern of Christ. The whole human race is subject to death, but Christ does more than merely plead. At each holy Mass He repeats His role as mediator, in fact, He even re-act-ualizes His death of sacrifice and atonement.

The *Gospel* unveils an inner phase of Christ's sacred passion. We feel ourselves present at the Feast of Tabernacles (about six months before the passion); vignettes of local color quickly convey the situation in Jerusalem. The pilgrims are standing in groups talking about the Messiah—in low voices, for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus stands in the temple preaching. There is an exchange of words, and the hatred of the Jews (darkness) becomes the sombre background against which

Christ acknowledges His divinity (light). The Pharisees and scribes, trained in doctrine, grasp His message: "I know Him because I am from Him, and He has sent me." They wish to seize Him, but "His hour has not yet come" (theme of Easter).

Offertory and *Communion* are sacrificial prayers on the lips of Christ. Notice how heavy and serious the first two chants are, while those of the sacrifice proper are quite joyous. Assume that the first two were sung by the penitents, the last two by the faithful (cf. the third Sunday of Lent).

3. Moses and Christ. Were one to give a title to today's Mass it could well be: Moses and Christ. For we are in the midst of "Moses' Week," as shown by the responsories at Matins. Moses, the bestower of manna, prefigured Christ who fed the people in the wilderness by miraculously multiplying loaves of bread, and who now gives the food of the Eucharist to Christians in the desert of life.

We have already seen how Moses is a type of Christ in other respects (e.g., last Sunday). Today, however, he foreshadows the *suffering* Savior. The Lesson tells a stirring story. Moses ascended Mt. Horeb to receive the law from God and remained on the holy mountain for forty days. In the meantime the people became restless and violated the covenant. They made a golden bull and worshiped before it, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out from the land of Egypt!" And they danced about "the golden calf," sacrificed to it, and made merry.

Inflamed with holy wrath Moses descended the mountain, broke the tables of the law in the people's presence, burned the bull, and inflicted a severe penalty on the offenders. And God resolved to reject His people for having sinned, and make Moses the ancestor of a new chosen race.

At this juncture the patriarch stands forth in all his greatness. He begs, he implores pardon for the people; from his lips come great and noble words: "Alas, this people has committed a very great sin; but now forgive them their transgressions. *If You do not, then erase my name from the book which You have written*!"

Such selfless devotion to his fellow men makes Moses a type of Christ, who sacrificed Himself for all mankind. The Jewish people actually tried to erase the name of Christ, their Leader and Redeemer, from their midst by delivering Him up to the Gentiles and crucifying Him. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a gibbet!" But the liturgy would have us look into the heart of Christ as He hangs in solitary grandeur on the Cross offering the high priestly sacrifice from the depths of His soul. In this we are aided by the psalms which today are passion songs. They help us understand the suffering soul of Christ. We shall limit comment to the four psalms from which the responsories are taken and which in ancient times were sung wholly or in part.

The Church uses Psalm 54 as a passion song (see Matins of Holy Thursday); therefore we repeat its sacred phrases as if we heard them from the lips of Christ. "I rock with grief, and am troubled at the voice of the enemy and the clamor of the wicked. . . . My heart quakes within Me; the terror of death has fallen upon Me." Christ is thinking of Judas, of all sinful Christians, of me:

"If an enemy had reviled Me,
I could have borne it;

Moses in prayer — a type of Christ, who gave Himself in bloody and unbloody sacrifice. The Mass begins with *Exaudi orationem meam* (a petition of the divine Moses) and ends with *Laetabimur in salutari tuo*. Every Mass follows this pattern; for in every Mass Christ and His members address petitions to the Father, and at the end leave with the joyful assurance of having been heard.

If he who hates Me had vaunted himself against Me,
I might have hidden from him.
But you, My other self,
My companion and My bosom friend!
You, whose comradeship I enjoyed;
at whose side I walked in procession in the house
of God!"

Christ sees the misery, the devastation wrought in men's souls by the flesh, the world, and the devil, and prays in the Gradual:

"You marked us out as sheep to be slaughtered;
Among the nations You scattered us.
You sold Your people for no great price;
You made no profit from the sale of them.
You made us the reproach of our neighbors,
the mockery and the scorn of those around us,
You made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock among the peoples" (Psalm 43).

With these thoughts in mind I read the Lesson. Christ, the second Moses, is wrestling in prayer with His Father for souls. He suffers and dies for them, "and the Lord is appeased." This is merely one aspect of Christ's suffering, nothing more than a preview (the Fore-Mass); in the Mass of the Faithful the approach is far more profound.

After the Offertory antiphon we continue with Psalm 39. St. Paul calls this psalm Christ's morning prayer as He entered the world, the liturgy makes it the evening prayer of Jesus on the Cross (Good Friday Matins). It is one of the best expressions of Christ's willing acceptance of suffering and death in obedience to His heavenly Father, "You did not care for victims and gifts. It was willingness and obedience that you gave to Me. You did not ask for holocausts and sin-offerings. Therefore I say: See, here I am. In the Scriptures it is written of Me that I will do Your will. O God, I do so with joy, for Your law is the delight of My heart."

How appropriate this psalm is at the Offertory, as I am about to share in Christ's bloody Sacrifice and in His spirit of immolation. As I unite myself with Him, my offering becomes His offering, a gift to be transformed at the consecration. This is a very practical way of living the whole day in the spirit of Christ's suffering and sacrifice, of making our suffering a part of His.

Finally the Communion hymn, Psalm 19. It is a prayer of our High priest, Jesus, a prayer before the great battle on Golgotha.

These four psalms should encourage us to study the spirit of Christ and His life of suffering in other parts of the psalter. That this approach is correct is shown by our Lord's own words, "All things must be fulfilled that are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44).

4. Psalm 19. On the Eve of Battle. Before engaging the enemy the king offers sacrifice, the priests bless the military equipment and pray for victory, the soldiers place their trust in God.

The application comes easy: our king is Christ; He leads God's battles until the end of time. It is not we who conquer, He conquers in us. Every day, while marching out to the front, we should say the battle prayer,

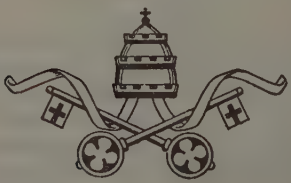
The design. The soldier of God goes forth to battle under the banner of Christ the King. Victory is obtained in the name of Christ and by virtue of His Sacrifice on the Cross (Lamb on the altar). The vignette following Psalm 20 indicates that the psalm is an excellent prayer for our Holy Father, the Pope.

"Father, I call upon You!" (verse 10). And if we offer the great Sacrifice with our King we can be sure of victory, for we fight not with "chariots and horses" but in His holy name.

The Lord answer you in time of distress;
the name of the God of Jacob defend you!
May He send you help from the sanctuary,
from Sion may He sustain you.
May He remember all your offerings
and graciously accept your holocaust.
May He grant you what is in your heart
and fulfill your every plan.
May we shout for joy at your victory
and raise the standards in the name of our God.
The Lord grant all your requests!

Now I know that the Lord has given victory to His anointed,
that He has answered him from His holy heaven
with the strength of His victorious right hand.
Some are strong in chariots; some, in horses;
but we are strong in the name of the Lord, our God.
Though they bow down and fall,
yet we stand erect and firm.

O Lord, grant victory to the king,
and answer us when we call upon You.



WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Paul

Three treasures of the Church

Christ "enlightens" the catechumens and opens their ears to understand the Our Father, the Creed and the four Gospels which He gives them through the Church.

Antiphons at sunrise and sunset: "Master, what did this man do to deserve being born blind? Jesus answered: Neither did this man nor his parents sin. The works of God are to be manifested through him" (Ben. Ant.). "The man who is called Jesus made clay with spittle, anointed my eyes, and now I see (Magn. Ant.). We should regard ourselves today as blind beggars to whom Christ will give spiritual vision.

In the life of the ancient Church today's liturgy was extremely important. It marked the most important scrutiny, the third, called the "opening of the ear." Spiritually, the ears of the catechumens were opened as they received the Creed, the Our Father, and the four Gospels, three precious jewels from the hands of Mother Church. And in the figure of the blind man miraculously cured they sensed a sign of paschal grace.

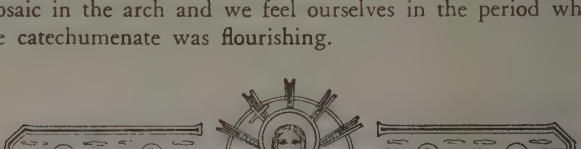
1. The Station. That today's liturgy has special importance is apparent from the choice of the stational church. The catechumens were led to their spiritual father, St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, who prefigured their conversion by his own experience on the road to Damascus.

The basilica of St. Paul, built over the apostle's grave, ranks high among Rome's most venerable holy places. The small church erected over the tomb by order of the Emperor Constantine the Great was replaced in 386 by a large and richly adorned basilica. Largest of all the ancient Roman churches, it had five naves and an enormous transept. The naves were separated by four rows of columns, the largest and most beautiful marble pillars from Roman times.

To Leo I, (440-461) who restored the building, is due the splendid mosaic, still extant, on the triumphal arch. A gift

from the Empress Galla Placidia, it pictures Christ and the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse with the symbols of the four evangelists, in the clouds. The great apse mosaic, executed between 1216 and 1227, represents Christ with His apostles.

This magnificent church was destroyed by fire in 1823; only the front, the arch, and the apse were saved. Through the generosity of several popes reconstruction work proceeded according to the former architectural plan. Now it is again one of the finest basilicas of Rome, although the present edifice cannot, of course, replace the ancient structure. A glance at the mosaic in the arch and we feel ourselves in the period when the catechumenate was flourishing.



2. Holy Mass (Cum sanctificatus). Today's stational service was ordained exclusively for the catechumens and included considerable ritual which in part is still observed in the administration of holy baptism. The service began with the acolyte calling the names of the catechumens. The priest put blessed salt in their mouths to symbolize the divine wisdom which they would soon receive. Thereupon they left the church and waited outside until asked to re-enter.

Meanwhile holy Mass, one of Lent's loveliest, began. As the choir chanted the *Introit*, Christ Himself stepped before the catechumens: "When I am sanctified in you (i.e., made glorious through your baptism), I will gather you from all regions

The picture is modelled after a mosaic in today's stational church. Wilpert notes that the present mosaic was "corrected by later hands." Since the beams of light represent Christ as the "Enlightener" and since He is surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists (the Gospels are given to the catechumens during the Fore-Mass), the design is appropriate for today's liturgy.

No
greater
LOVE
than this exists-
that a man should
sacrifice his LIFE
for those he loves.

(of the heathen). I will pour forth over you pure water, and cleanse you from every sin, and give you a new spirit" (promise of baptism and confirmation). Psalm 33, the catechumens' response, is a song of thanksgiving in view of imminent liberation.

The bishop continues the service with the prayer, "We ask You, O Lord, to bestow upon our chosen ones the grace of approaching with wisdom and dignity to praise Your glory. Through Your majesty may they be restored to that pristine status which they lost through original sin." Now the "chosen ones" were summoned and they took their places in order. Upon the deacon's invitation they kneel down, then rise again; their sponsors are directed to make a cross on their foreheads, and the acolytes impose hands.

After this ritual has been repeated three times, the Mass is continued with the reading of two Lessons (a sign of the formulary's great age). *1st Lesson*: Ezechiel promises the Jews in exile that they will return to the Promised Land and God will forgive them; typically this holds true for the catechumens and likewise for us. Both they and we will be given "a new heart and a new spirit." Easter is the fulfillment of this promise. *1st Gradual*: Mother Church extends her invitation: "Come, children, listen to me. Be enlightened."

2nd Lesson: "Wash yourselves and be clean . . . if your sins are as scarlet and purple, they will become as white as snow and wool." *2nd Gradual* (echo of the Lesson): "Happy the nation that God chooses as heir." Before the Gospel was read, four deacons appeared from the sacristy, carrying the four books of the Gospels and accompanied by candle-bearers and thurifers. They took positions at the four corners of the altar.

Meanwhile the choir sang: "Through the word of the Lord the heavens were made"—an allusion to the reading of the four Gospels about to take place. How reverently we should hear God's mighty word! The bishop then addressed the catechumens and explained to them the purpose, content, and number of the Gospels. Thereupon the deacon read the beginning of St. Matthew's Gospel, and the bishop explained the evan-

gelist's symbol. The remaining three Gospels were accorded similar honor.

This ceremony, called the "opening of the ears," is related to an observance in present day baptism, viz., when the priest touches the ears of the baby he says: "Be opened! (Ephpheta)." It is a sign that our senses are made spiritually capable to understand God's message.

Now the Mass was resumed with the *Gospel* on the cure of the man born blind! How well it complemented the previous ceremony! This blind man was a figure of the catechumens for they too will receive heavenly light (baptism) and be thrown into conflict with darkness (martyrdom). With the man of the Gospel the catechumens fall at Jesus' feet and profess their faith and gratitude in a joyful, "I believe, Lord."

Immediately after the reading of the Gospel came the solemn *traditio* of the Creed and the Our Father. The acolyte, holding his hand over a catechumen's head, sang the Creed first in Greek and then in Latin. After the bishop had emphasized the importance of this "summary of our faith," the Our Father was taught them and a short explanation given after each petition. Then the catechumens were dismissed and the Sacrifice proper began.

At the *Offertory*, the faithful chanted a thanksgiving psalm for their redemption, happy over possessing the blessings just promised to the catechumens. Psalm 65 is an Easter song to which in ancient times the alleluia was, in fact, added. In the Sacrifice Christ is life and light, as the faithful on procession gratefully proclaim. The *Secret* brings out two important theological points: first, the holy Sacrifice deletes sins (the disease germs in a life of grace); secondly, it confers health of soul and body (if not on earth, surely in heaven).

The *Communion* voices our belief in the Eucharist as a source of enlightenment; without doubt it perfects the privileges of baptism. The *Prayer over the People* begs God to open our hearing; we need His assistance to pray properly.

3. And I? Today my soul, anxious to be quickened by the graces of baptism, is offered much nourishment and enlighten-

ment. In spirit I accompany the catechumens some fifteen centuries ago. I enter the basilica of St. Paul. He is also my spiritual father, for practically every Sunday his admonishing voice resounds in my ears as the Epistle is read. At his grave I desire to renew the grace of baptism. What that means I learn by the Lessons, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." "I went, I washed, and now I see." It is a quickening of life, a new creation!

Today I receive three precious gifts from the hands of Mother Church: the Gospels, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer. I take them reverently, gratefully. I kiss the book of the Gospels; for me it takes the place of Christ's earthly life. In the Gospel book the Church sees and honors Christ Himself. Following the lead of the liturgy we should "live ourselves into the life" of Jesus. Christ came to earth for me, what He did for the sick and what He said, He now says and does for me. How precious the Gospel is! It opens my heart to the thoughts and words and deeds of Jesus.

The *Creed*, every word of it, is sealed with martyrs' blood In the Middle Ages it was used as a prayer for the dying. The *Our Father*—the only prayer the Lord taught us! I must say it slowly and reverently, always. In the Mass it has an excellent position. In ancient times it was esteemed almost as highly as a sacrament.

Through today's liturgy I let God open my ears, loosen my tongue, and give light to my eyes. For years the rite of opening the ears at baptism has been accorded far too little attention. It is a sacramental which gives the power of hearing and understanding God's word. How we should use and profit by this organ of supernatural life! Christ calls those who hear and keep God's word *blessed*.

But I should not only hear; I should also *speak* to God. Life's great task is to learn the sublime art of prayer. Without God's grace I shall never succeed. All this is part of the enlightenment for which I pray in today's Sacrifice.

4. Psalm 20. Thanksgiving for Victory. In the missal's present arrangement there is no indication that Psalm 20 was once sung as today's Communion psalm. Psalms 19 and 20 form one poem. The former is a prayer before battle, the latter a thanksgiving hymn after victory has been achieved.

Outline of Psalm 20 (two strophes):

A. Thanksgiving for the king's victory. God has responded to the royal plea (2-3) and will grant the king a long and glorious reign (4-8).
B. Congratulations to the king in the form of a prophetic promise. The king will conquer over all his enemies (9-13), for which may Yahweh be praised (14).

2 "O Lord, in Your strength the king is glad;
in Your victory how greatly he rejoices!
3 You have granted him his heart's desire;
You refused not the wish of his lips.

4 For You welcomed him with goodly blessings,
You placed on his head a crown of pure gold.
5 He asked life of You: You gave him
length of days forever and ever.
6 Great is his glory in Your victory;
majesty and splendor You conferred upon him.
7 For You made him a blessing forever;
You gladdened him with the joy of Your presence.
8 For the king trusts in the Lord,
and through the kindness of the Most High he stands
unshaken.

9 May your hand reach all your enemies,
and your right hand reach your foes!
10 Make them burn as though in a fiery furnace,
when you appear.
May the Lord consume them in His anger;
let fire devour them.
11 Destroy their fruit from the earth
and their posterity from among men.
12 Though they intend evil against you,
devising plots, they cannot succeed,

13 For you shall put them to flight;
you shall aim your shafts against them.

14 Be extolled, O Lord, in Your strength!
We will sing, chant the praise of Your might."

Application. For us Christ spells victory. Under His leadership and in Him we too will conquer. With what enthusiasm the faithful once sang this psalm as they looked forward to the spiritual triumph of the catechumens!

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at Sts. Sylvester and Martin

Christ awakens the dead

Now come two Masses built around the theme of bodily and spiritual resurrection, today and tomorrow. Tomorrow's is the older, it is pointed toward the catechumens; today's is more recent, it is modeled on the earlier, and directs its message primarily toward penitents. Both catechumens and penitents must be awakened by Christ from spiritual death while we, the faithful, throughout the whole of Lent, should become constantly more alive in God through the holy Eucharist.

The key antiphons: "Jesus was going to a city called Naim when, unexpectedly, a dead man, the only son of his mother,

The finest Old Testament figure for the Eucharist is the manna which Moses gave the Chosen People (every Thursday is a little Corpus Christi). The sacred objects in the Holy of Holies prefigured holier realities in Christian churches. Note the pillar of fire and the cloud of light—symbols of God's guiding presence.

was carried out" (Ben. Ant.). "A great prophet has risen among us. God has visited His people" (Magn. Ant.).

In the morning the Church sings the beginning and in the evening the end of the Gospel pericope; thereby she wishes to teach us to live its message throughout the day.

1. **Stational Theme.** The two stational saints, Sts. Sylvester and Martin, were the first non-martyrs honored by the Roman Church. The illustrious Pope Sylvester I and the eminent bishop of Tours, Martin, have maintained their high place of honor in the ecclesiastical calendar down through the centuries to the present day. In our stational church, originally a residence house for priests of the church at Rome, St. Sylvester was honored at a very early date; later, when this building was replaced by a basilica in honor of St. Martin, St. Sylvester receded into the background (it was at this time that the stational service was introduced).

In the ninth century the relics of St. Sylvester and various martyrs were transferred to our station; here they still repose in the crypt. The choice of Lessons may be due to the fact that St. Martin brought various persons back to life, miracles which undoubtedly added to his prestige.

2. **Holy Mass (Laetetur).** A penitential Mass! The lovely harmony between the Epistle and the Gospel—two resurrection miracles—strikes one immediately. In both accounts three persons are active: a widowed mother overwhelmed by grief, a dead youth raised to life, and a miracle worker. Note, one striking difference. The prophet restores life to the youth only after long effort; exercising His sovereign power Jesus obtains the same result by a single word! He is Lord of death and of life! In a few days He will seal His victory by His own resurrection.

These instances of bodily revival after physical death are symbols of the sinner who will rise spiritually at Easter. Joyous strains of Easter can therefore be heard in the background. The Mass begins with the word *Laetetur*, rejoice! Possibly Laetare Sunday is the reason for this. In any case the liturgy aims at

awakening a spirit of joy among the penitents because the dead who seek the Lord will rise again.

Psalm 104 depicts God leading the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land after the manner of a provident and kind shepherd. Their journey prefigured the way of penitents and faithful. Easter is the Promised Land. According to the *Collect* fasting brings happiness and spiritual sensitivity. From the lips of penitents filled with confidence comes the *Gradual*. The *Secret* is theological in nature; the prayers of the Church in union with the holy Sacrifice are of themselves acceptable unto God, but when we are free of sin they become still more pleasing.

The *Communion* reflects upon God's part in man's life. Yahweh was my God when I was young, may He continue as my protector when I am old. (Psalm 70) This psalm invites us to meditate upon the Eucharist as a lifelong "viaticum." In the *Postcommunion* we beg that the Eucharist may be a healing medicine for us rather than judgment. In the *Prayer over the People* we call God our "Teacher and Leader" and beg Him to wipe out our sins.

3. Life and Death. These two awe-inspiring realities play an important role in the Bible and in the liturgy. How often Christ speaks of life eternal! Yes, it is true to say that what we call life and death is only life and death in an unreal sense; our earthly life is merely a shadow existence, and bodily death a bit of sleep.

Real life is sharing in divine life, in Christ's life. He is *the* Life, and He alone can give it. Only persons who have the grace of baptism can say that they are really alive. This life is nourished and developed by the Eucharist, the wellspring of life eternal. The instances of the dead raised to life in today's Mass are figures of this higher life. Here are some thoughts on the three persons involved, viz., the mother, the youth, the Savior.

a) The two women symbolize the *Church* in a very graphic way. The first typifies the Church by her vehement pleading; she embraces the feet of God and will not let go until her plea

is answered. In the other we see the Church's motherly grief, her sorrow over the sins of her children. St. Ambrose expresses it well in today's Office: "If your sins are so great that you cannot wash them away by your tears of penance, let Mother Church weep for you; before God's throne she pleads for every individual just as this widowed mother wept for her only son. For she suffers the spiritual agony of a mother when she sees how her children hurry toward eternal death because of mortal sin!"

Until now we may have regarded the Church more as a wise governess of Christians than as the mother who gives, develops, and preserves life. Perhaps we have watched her too little in her role as the weeping woman and the persistent pleader who will not rest until her dead children are awakened unto heavenly life. Let us help Mother Church in praying for sinners during the Office and the Mass. But we can do most in relieving her anxiety by avoiding sin ourselves and its dangers.

b) The dead youth is a figure of the soul dead in sin. A soul in the state of grace is a youth capable of remaining eternally young. At the foot of the altar we pray, "I will approach the altar of God, of God who gladdens my youth (of grace)." Even when the body grows old and the face becomes wrinkled, your soul remains ever youthful and blooming. Your spiritual youth has but one mortal enemy, sin. How many walking corpses may be stalking past us!

The Office continues the comparison. The dead man lay on

a wooden bier; through wood (the tree of knowledge) sin came into the world, but when Jesus touched the wood, that is, ascended the Cross, the dead man came to life. The pallbearers are our passions: ". . . we too lie as it were lifeless upon a bier when the fire of immoderate desire flames up within us, when the frost of ungodliness makes us shiver, when the power of the spirit is paralyzed by the indolence of the flesh, or when our hearts, overgrown with sin, filter the pure light of the spirit. These are the bearers of our corpse" (Ambrose). They are hurrying to bury us in an eternal, infernal grave!

c) Christ awakens us from the sleep of death. Such is the mission which He came to accomplish upon earth: "In truth, in truth I say to you: the hour will come—it is already here—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they who hear it, will live." Such too is the great mission of the Church. New life is ever burgeoning as Christ calls the dead in baptism and in penance, as He calls all of us now in this holy springtime of Easter.

Christ approaches me personally. He takes me by the hand and says, "Young man, arise!" The spiritual resurrection He effects covers my whole life, from baptism to the resurrection of the body. Christ touches all the powers of soul and body. He gives me a new spirit, a new heart, new light for my eyes, new hearing. If I repent it is His work, if I grow in grace it likewise is His work. Lent and Easter is one great miracle of raising the dead to life, "Young man, arise!"

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Eusebius

Let us also go, that we may die with Him

In today's ancient and excellent Mass formulary the catechumens were taught how resurrection unto life is found in Christ. Soon Christ would manifest in them His power over the spiritual death of sin. But first He Himself must die for them.

Key chants, morning and evening: "Lazarus, our friend, is

sleeping. Let us go and waken him from sleep" (Ben. Ant.). "Lord, if You had been here, Lazarus would not have died. But by this time he is already decayed, for he is dead four days in the tomb" (Magn. Ant.). Throughout the day we will keep our minds occupied with this edifying scene.

1. **Stational Theme.** On August 14 the Martyrology contains these comments on St. Eusebius, today's stational saint: "At Rome the death of the holy priest Eusebius. Because of his strong apologies for the Catholic faith he was imprisoned in his own house by the Arian Emperor Constantine. There he remained, patient in prayer, for seven months until he died." The station, an old titular church from the fourth century, stands on the great common cemetery of ancient (pagan) Rome. Since the stational procession passed over the mass graves, it is easy to see why both Lessons tell of persons raised from the dead. What contrast: paganism was sinking into its grave while Christ summoned His catechumens, penitents, and faithful to resurrection!

2. **Holy Mass (Meditatio).** With minds meditating on the Lord the catechumens come to church. They cannot wait for Easter; their "Helper and Redeemer is always before them" (*Intr.*). The Easter sun is already rising (Ps. 18). It is no great surprise to find the *Collect* alluding to baptism, "You are renewing the world by Your wondrous mysteries."

This renewal is illustrated in the two resurrection accounts which present Christ as the wonder-worker who once raised

The phoenix is an ancient Christian symbol of resurrection.

dead bodies to life and now vivifies the catechumens spiritually. The parallel character of the two narratives puts in better relief the fullness of Christ's power. For Elias wakened the youth with the help of many prayers, he wrestled with God for the boy's life. But Christ stands calmly as Lord of life and death; softly He speaks a word and the miracle is wrought.

The *Gradual* is the Lesson's echo; only God is the Lord of life, toward Him all our confidence is directed. The *Lesson* serves as background for the *Gospel*. The latter has many facets of which the most noticeable is suffering. Today is Friday, just two weeks before Good Friday. In the resurrection of Lazarus the Sanhedrin found the final excuse for the death sentence against Jesus. Thomas' exclamation, "Let us go that we may die with Him," becomes the Church's ejaculation during the coming days. The catechumens hear Jesus say, "I am the resurrection and the life." How powerfully these words will affect them in a fortnight. In ancient liturgy Lazarus was a symbol of sinful and unredeemed man, his resurrection a type of Easter and baptism.

Because Lent means humiliation there is real consolation in the *Offertory*, "To Your oppressed people, Lord, You bring salvation!" The *Communion* is a free but very effective adaptation of the Gospel story. The liturgy attempts to show how Lazarus' resurrection is accomplished in us through the Eucharist. It is the Eucharist which renders possible the three last pleas of Our Father (*Post.*).

3. Lazarus and Ourselves. Included among the usual subjects for ancient Christian pictures on monuments and in the catacombs is that depicting Lazarus' resurrection. Lazarus was regarded as a symbol of man risen from spiritual death. According to liturgical thinking the catechumens and penitents who come to life spiritually at Easter, indeed the whole paschal Church experiencing holy springtime and celebrating the joyous resurrection of its members, now repeat and fulfill the miracle at Bethany.

The story of Lazarus' resurrection is one of the most touching and tender passages in the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel

written by John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved." But we know that the liturgy is not history, satisfied with teaching past facts—the liturgy gives present realities. Jesus is now living and working in His Church according to the spirit and meaning of the Gospel. If we put ourselves in the place of the Biblical persons, our reading and reflecting upon the Gospel will become more fruitful.

Here is a key to a proper understanding of Sacred Scripture. The dispositions, thoughts, feelings and deeds of Christ are the same today as when He walked the roads of Palestine; indeed, they were only symbols then, today they are actualities. We must transfer the Gospel episodes into our own hearts. Christ's words are addressed to us, for our benefit. The riches of divine wisdom which constitute the Gospel exist for the Church today, and through her for each individual.

The time is just a few weeks before the Pasch. Jesus is in Perea. A messenger comes, "Your friend Lazarus is sick!" What a tender message! He did not say, "Come quickly!" Jesus would know what to do. The Church repeats the messenger's words, "The people you love are sick," and she means—me. The Lord delays, intending to work a greater miracle; but of His friend He speaks again and again. About us too He is tenderly anxious, even when He delays. Finally He says openly: Lazarus is dead. Repeatedly Christ used the word "sleep" instead of "die." Earthly life and earthly death are but shadows of true life and true death.

Now Jesus resolved to leave Perea for Bethany. It is His death march. With Thomas we should say, "Let us go and die with Him!" For do we not intend to suffer mystically with Him? The sacred passion is about to begin. It is consecrated not merely to the memory of Christ's historical suffering; rather now in the midst of life we should die in our lower nature and be crucified with Christ.

Jesus arrives at Bethany. I observe His behavior toward the mourners. How kind He is, yet how firm as He leads them on, instructing them. He adapts Himself to every situation, is considerate to everyone. In every age Christ deals with two

types of people, first, the practical and realistic Martha-souls. He spoke to Martha, with absolute assurance. Lazarus will rise again. Step by step He is readying her faith for the coming miracle. We admire Martha's strong, undeviating faith in Christ and in His words. Such faith is required from me before spiritual renewal can take place.

Jesus treats Mary very differently. He is profoundly moved by her sorrow for He has a Heart that feels in a human way. A cold, unsympathetic spirit is never Christian. The scene at the grave is most impressive. Jesus weeps; His tears are precious to me, since they were shed for me as well. He prays before the open grave, thanks His Father for hearing Him. Then He says, "Lazarus, come forth!" He is summoning me, for I too am lying in a grave, fettered by my lower nature. For two more weeks I will be in the grave of Lenten humiliation, then I shall rise with Christ.

4. Psalm 21. The Suffering Savior. By a very fortunate coincidence the most famous psalm on the Messiah's suffering occurs as today's *Communion* hymn. According to the unanimous conviction of the Fathers, of the Church, and even of the synagogue, Psalm 21 is directly Messianic, i.e., it describes Christ's suffering in the literal sense. Perhaps David had a vision in which he beheld the crucifixion. From the viewpoint of content there are three distinct sections: 1. Christ's lamentations on Good Friday, 2. His agony, 3. His vindication.

In figurative language the second section of Psalm 21 describes the sacred passion of Christ—the Messiah attacked by lions, bulls, and dogs. The Savior is represented by His Cross and monogram. It is not a *crux gemmata,* since He is still suffering, but His Cross is a tree of life from which our salvation buds.

The psalm becomes dearer to us as we recall that Jesus prayed at least one verse of it on the Cross, if not the whole psalm. In this prayer the drama on Calvary comes to a climax, the suffering Savior is seemingly abandoned by God. While we pray its sacred verses we stand in spirit upon Golgotha and allow the harrowing scene to make its impression upon us. Of course, we will not be able to apply each word and figure to a specific action, for the psalmist is painting Christ's dreadful abandonment with the brush of poetry; he wrestles with words and figures in order to sketch the dreadful reality.

In the first strophe note the uncertainty of mood; on the one hand the sufferer is rooted in God by devotion, confidence, obedience; on the other he feels abandoned by God, helpless, on the verge of despair.

In the second strophe various scenes from the passion pass by before us. The enemy is disguised as savage animals, but several prophecies are stated in clear and easily intelligible terms, "They have pierced My hands and feet . . . they have distributed My garments among them. . . . Dry as a potsherd is My tongue."

The third strophe brings a complete change. The chalice has been drained to the dregs, and now the glory of resurrection pierces through the darkness. Christ ends His redemptive work with words of thanks.

SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Station at St. Nicholas in Prison

Come to the water, you who are thirsty

Soon the great day of baptism will have arrived; today's Mass resembles a final summons to the catechumens. Day by day they are realizing more fully what Christ means to them: He is a warm, life-bestowing sun; He is a thirst-quenching fountain of water; He is their good Shepherd, hospitable Host, and devoted Mother. And for us Christ is all these things in the holy Eucharist.

The keynote antiphons: "He who follows Me, does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life, says the Lord" (Ben. Ant.). "It is I who bear witness to Myself, and He who

sent me, the Father, bears witness to Me" (Magn. Ant.). Words concerning divine light are very appropriate at sunrise.

1. Holy Mass (Sitientes). In company with the catechumens of former centuries we go to the church of St. Lawrence outside the Walls (not until the early Middle Ages, when the catechumenate had long been discontinued was the station changed to St. Nicholas in Prison). This stational church, dedicated to the patron of catechumens, slants the day's liturgy. There will be another scrutiny of the catechumens; an exceptionally beautiful Fore-Mass extends a final invitation to receive baptism. For both catechumens and faithful there is pasture, light and water.

Once more the basic inner connection between baptism and Eucharist is put very clearly, viz., the Eucharist continues what baptism began. The former maintains and nourishes divine life, the latter brings it into existence. In both sacraments the Church is our Mother, in the one through birth, in the other through nourishment. This reflection sheds new light upon our Lenten experience. It gives a message to both catechumens and faithful, for that which baptism inaugurates should be developed by the Eucharist. The catechumens grow in the womb of their mother, the faithful receive nourishment from the Church's breast. With these thoughts in mind we begin holy Mass.

The *Introit* invites, "Come, all who are thirsty, to the fountains of water, drink with joy!" Christ is now directing these words to the souls of men thirsting for happiness. Truly Christ and His teachings can quench that thirst. "My people, hear my law!" In the *Lesson* the lovely picture of the Good Shepherd met the catechumen's eye. Christ was inviting them to look into His loving, redeeming Heart, "I shall hear you in the time of grace."

At present He is setting us free from the fetters of sin; from out of darkness He is calling us into the light. He leads us, gives us water at the fountains. The picture enlarges, we see heathens hurrying to the Good Shepherd like scattered sheep. And He comforts all of them. This thought fills the

Church with such joy that she calls upon heaven and earth to join her in loud jubilation. Christ's love for us is greater than mother love, for "He has marked us in His hands" (so the passage continues) by His wounds on the Cross.

In the *Gradual* the catechumens direct a confident and trustful plea to the Lord. They feel like paupers and orphans while awaiting God's promised help. His answer comes in the *Gospel,* "I am the light of the world!" He is also our light; if we reflect His goodness, we will be little suns. But the Jews, who walked in darkness, did not know Him or the Father. "No one seized Him, for His hour had not yet come" (Easter theme).

The *Offertory* too contributes to understanding our Redeemer. Christ is "Rock, Fortress, Savior"; as an offering we place upon the altar our firm confidence in Him. When one considers the whole of Psalm 17, the picture of our Savior in His redeeming work becomes even more graphic. We have, indeed, received good tidings in abundance; we must, therefore, have full confidence in Christ. There is only one obstacle, i.e., "our reluctant wills" (*Secr.*); grace alone can make them docile, and this grace is given in the holy Sacrifice.

At the *Communion* the Eucharistic psalm (22) is chanted: The Lord is my Shepherd, the Lord is my Host! The *Prayer over the People* does not conform strictly to pattern; it is a sincere and fervent penitential prayer. Towards those who approach Him God prefers to be merciful rather than angry; we therefore beg for the grace of true sorrow over our sins in order to receive the comfort of forgiveness.

2. Lent and Christ. It is noteworthy that whereas the more modern approach to Lent occupies itself with sin and personal penance, the older method was simply to follow Christ through the various phases of His saving work. It will be worth the effort to study this assertion more in detail.

The first week of Lent put before us Christ the warrior and penitent leading us to transfiguration. In the second week we saw Him as the servant of God who humbled Himself, be-

coming obedient unto death. During this time we took our place among Jesus' followers and walked in His footsteps. Beginning with the third week Christ, as our Redeemer, bestows upon us light, life, and nourishment. He meets us as the physician and healer of our soul. Remember Naaman the leper, the great day at Capharnaum, the Samaritan woman, the adulteress, all those who sick in body and soul sought and found healing.

In the present fourth week we have seen Christ in His work of suffering and in His work of bestowing the graces of salvation. The tableaus showing the latter change in quick succession. First we see Jesus interceding like Moses (Thursday), then as the Enlightener (Wednesday), as the Restorer of Life (Thursday and Friday), and today in the roles of Shepherd, Host, Mother, Light and Water. Let us try to grasp the spirit of these five roles and play our corresponding parts.

If Christ is our kind and watchful Shepherd, we should be His docile sheep, easily led, pastured, and corralled. If He is our hospitable Host, we will be His grateful guests, feeling quite at home in His House. If He is like an anxious, tender Mother, we will be His obedient children. If He is the Light-bringer, then we will open the doors and windows of our souls and allow His rays to shine in upon us. If He is the Fountain of Water in this desert of life, then we will drink in full draughts.

These passages from today's Mass should echo long within us:

The Shepherd: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures He gives me repose" (Ps. 22).

The Host: "You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Ps. 22).

The Mother: "Does a woman forget the child of her body or withhold mercy from her own son? Even if this could be, I will never forget you" (Is. 49:15).

The Light: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

The Water: "You who are thirsty, come to the water; and you who have no money, come and drink with joy!" (Is. 55:1).

The Rock: "The Lord is rock, my fortress, and my savior. In Him I trust" (Ps. 17:3).

3. The "Good Shepherd" Psalm (22) ranks as one of the finest in the psalter.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures He gives me repose;
Beside restful waters He leads me;
He refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths
for His name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for You are at my side
With Your rod and Your staff
that give me courage.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;

Ancient Christian drawings inspired the above design. The Good Shepherd (Christ) cares for His flock with flute and staff, and leads them to life-giving waters and luxuriant meadows. Note the milk pail on the tree. The monogram, ποιμην αγιος, i.e., Holy Shepherd, is also found found on ancient Christian tombs. A table set for guests is seen in the center.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for years to come.

This psalm, ascribed according to its title to the royal poet David, consists of two stanzas, easily distinguished by the change in the personal pronoun. The first is a meditation and speaks of God in the third person; the second is a prayer and addresses Him directly. In the two lovely pictures of the shepherd and the good host, the psalm describes the goodness and providence of God. Perhaps David was thinking of his youth, when he personally experienced the joys and hardships of a shepherd's life.

Stanza I. Let us analyze the psalm and try to see a fuller Christian message than that in the divinely inspired literal sense of the words. In the first stanza the sacred poet speaks of Yahweh as a good, provident shepherd who offers His sheep everything they need. He gives them four things: 1. pasture, 2. guidance, 3. protection, and 4. love.

God is our shepherd, and we His sheep! For us Christians the picture becomes still more striking if we regard the shepherd as Christ, and ourselves as His flock. Because Jesus was fond of using this figure, we are justified in making this application.

First of all, a good shepherd provides green pastures for his flock, and water (the latter is particularly important in the Orient where it is very scarce). Now Christ, our Good Shepherd, leads us to verdant pastures, and provides abundant spiritual food and drink. The good things of God's kingdom are meant, viz., the faith that assuages the soul's longing, grace, divine sonship. And who would fail to think of the holy Eucharist, the Bread from heaven given us by the Lord. Surely this Bread may be likened to "verdant pasture . . . restful waters that refresh the soul."

Secondly, a good shepherd proves himself a safe leader for his flock. In the Orient the shepherd walks ahead, his flock follows after. Christ applies this to Himself in a parable:

"When He has let out His own sheep, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. . . ." (John 10:4). Our Savior is leading us through life! He goes before us with the Cross, we follow His footsteps in the holy fellowship of love and suffering.

Thirdly, His way does not pass only through sunny fields, He also accompanies us through the "dark valley" of death, through spiritual dryness and distress, during hours on the Mount of Olives, in temptations and bitterness. Here we need His guidance, desperately. In such times we seem to lack the psalmist's comforting awareness, "You are with me!" (Of this verse the philosopher Kant said, "All the books I have read have not brought me as much consolation as this one word of Scripture.")

Fourthly, the Good Shepherd rears me as a child of God and heir of heaven. For this He uses two means, one is His pastoral staff, the other His rod of correction; that is, He teaches me through joy and suffering.

Stanza II. In the second stanza the scene changes to that of an Oriental host. In the ancient Orient hospitality ranked high among the social virtues, especially among the Jews; the guest was overwhelmed with honor and attention. Thus Christ once complained bitterly of a Pharisee who had not shown Him due respect, "I entered your house, and you gave Me no water for My feet . . . you gave Me no kiss . . . you did not anoint My head. . . ." (Luke 7:44f.).

In our psalm the good shepherd honors his guest in five ways: he prepares a tasty meal; he anoints his head; he gives him a goblet of wine; he forms a lasting friendship; indeed, he offers him a permanent home. It is hardly necessary to develop this part of the parable any further or to apply it to Christ and the soul. By our entry into the kingdom of God we have become Christ's guest; and our good Host prepares for us "the Lord's table" with its "cup of salvation." In baptism and confirmation He anoints our heads with oil, we are His friends, privileged to dwell in closest intimacy with Him.

Passiontide

The Church now enters the period of mourning over her divine Bridegroom as she puts on her widow's weeds. Passiontide, beginning today, marks the third stage in our preparation for Easter. If Pre-Lent was only an introduction and the past four weeks a time of conversion and spiritual renewal, Passiontide in a special way commemorates Christ's suffering.

In the liturgy this finds expression in various ways. For instance, the crosses and statues in churches are draped, an outward sign of the Church's inward sorrow. Over crosses, brilliant with precious stones and a-shimmer with gold or silver, a cloak is placed (in past times the image of the suffering Christ was not on crosses), while pictures and statues lose importance in the face of Christ's suffering.

The last remaining traces of joy are eliminated — the *Gloria Patri* is omitted in the Introit, Lavabo, and Breviary responsories. The omission of Psalm 42, at the foot of the altar before Mass, is likewise interpreted as an expression of mourning, as in Requiem Masses. (The real reason, however, is that the same psalm is sung in the Introit, and in ancient times the liturgy avoided such repetitions.)

To a greater degree than these outward signs, the content itself of the liturgy centers upon our Lord's suffering; in the nocturns the Books of Moses give place to the prophet Jeremias, the most illustrious Old Testament type of the suffering Messiah. The theme of Christ's sacred passion, which indeed was accorded greater prominence during the past weeks, now

predominates; this change is most noticeable in the responsories of the Mass and Office which give the sentiments of Christ in His suffering rather than of the penitent congregation or the catechumens.

The ordinary of Passiontide (i.e., hymns, chapters, responsories, antiphons) deserves special notice for in these prayers the Church most clearly voices her feelings. In them the finest passages of Scripture on our Lord's sufferings are brought together.

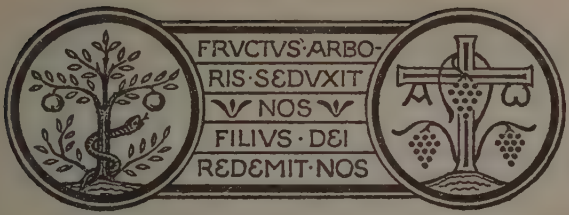
Main thoughts of the coming week. The liturgy displays great skill in relating the theme of suffering to that of baptism. Note in particular the week's three oldest Masses. *Monday*: A favorite contrast — the pagan Ninivites (catechumens) do penance while the Jews plan to kill Jesus. "Let him who thirsts come to Me and drink!" *Wednesday*: examination day for the catechumens on the commandments they received two weeks ago. The wolves are closing in on the Lamb who is about to give His sheep "eternal life." *Friday*: Jeremias, a type of Christ, laments over the Jews, "who perfidiously leave their Lord, the fountain of living water." "Jesus dies for His people and for the scattered children of God, whom He assembles together." *Tuesday* follows the ordinary Tuesday pattern. The Lesson presents an unusual example of active charity, while the theme of suffering is present throughout the Mass. *Thursday,* the last "Penitents' Mass" of the season, features an account from the Babylonian exile and the story of the repentant woman. *Saturday* is the vigil of Palm Sunday.

PASSION SUNDAY

Station at St. Peter

The High-priest enters His sanctuary

Before our eyes the Church unrolls three tableaus on Christ's sacred passion, a) an Old Testament type, b) a New Testament account, c) a scene that transcends time. a) The Church takes us back into Jewish history to about the sixth



century before Christ. Upon David's throne unworthy kings were sitting. In the Promised Land idols were being worshiped. Injustice and immorality prevailed in the very nation where Yahweh was king.

Then the spirit of God awakened prophets and commissioned them to warn the people and their leaders. Among the greatest of these was Jeremias, a man of noble soul, full of love toward God, his people, and his native land. He saw the approaching calamity of the exile and preached penance, but his fellow men paid no heed. Indeed they preferred being rid of the troublesome prophet, and took to persecuting him, tormenting him.

Since his admonitions proved futile, the promised misfortunes came; city and temple were destroyed, king and people led into exile. Upon the ruins of Sion Jeremias sat, moaning his Lamentations. In his very person rather than in deed or word Jeremias typified the suffering Savior. Today the Church reads the beginning of his book. (The beginning indicates the entire book.) He will accompany us through the whole of Passiontide.

b) The New Testament story comes from the Gospel. Christ is surrounded by hostile Jews; already they are lifting stones to kill Him. His death was decided upon, the act has been actually accomplished in their hearts, but "His hour had not

The drawing contrasts the tree of knowledge in paradise with the tree of the Cross upon which the Eucharistic vine is entwined. The fruit of the former was death, the fruit of the latter is life. The inscription says: The fruit of the tree seduced us, the Son of God redeemed us. The drawing illustrates the preface of Passiontide.

yet come." Christ stands in their midst full of divine majesty. "Who of you can convict Me of sin?" "Before Abraham was, I am."

c) The scene that transcends time occurs in the Epistle. It is a solemn liturgical act. The divine High-priest in full panoply enters the Holy of Holies of heaven with His own blood and accomplishes eternal redemption. In these three tableaus the whole of this Sunday's liturgy is set forth.

1. Passiontide. "Today, when you hear the voice of the Lord, do not close your hearts." With these words of the invitatory the Church admonishes us to begin worthily the great season which commemorates the sufferings of our Lord. At the same time they are an invitation to suffer and sacrifice with Christ as members of His mystical Body. In solemn terms the first responsory of Matins introduces this passion period and gives us a glimpse of Easter, only fourteen days hence, "These are the days that you should keep holy when they come. Fourteen days from now the Pasch of the Lord will begin, and on the fifteenth you will celebrate the great solemnity in honor of God Most High."

During the coming two weeks let us draw close to Christ in His bitter suffering, to Jesus the Man of Sorrows. Let us weep and sympathize with Him; but let us likewise regard Him as the conqueror upon the battlefield of Golgotha, with whom we too will be victorious. Let us see in Him the King who rules while suffering upon the throne of the Cross, with whom we too may rule by rising above the troubles and misfortunes of life. In spirit let us follow our High-priest as He passes into the Holy of Holies to sacrifice Himself for us; He is inviting us to share in His priesthood by offering ourselves as victims.

2. Holy Mass (Judica me). Today we pilgrimage to the grave of the prince of the apostles. In ancient times a vigil, with ordinations, was kept here at St. Peter's during the night before Passion Sunday. The station and the content of the Mass point to this. Peter was the first successor to the divine

High-priest Christ. In the *Introit* the Lord is struggling as, on the Mount of Olives, He begs for a judicial decision between Himself and the unholy Jewish people, particularly the evil, treacherous man (Judas).

In the *Epistle* we see the divine High-priest moving toward the altar of the Cross. With His own blood He will atone for mankind's sins, He the sinless One. The *Gradual* and *Tract* are laments from the lips of Christ in His suffering; our thoughts dwell on the scourging pillar ("Upon My back the plowers plowed; long did they make their furrows"), or on the Cross ("Do Me justice, O God, and fight My fight against a faithless people; from the deceitful and impious man rescue Me").

The *Gospel* shows us Christ as the Son of God, sinless and eternal. Another glance into the abysmal wickedness of His enemies;

The day's three leading themes are here pictured in one drawing. Instead of Christ in agony we see the Cross with the chi-rho monogram and the letters, alpha and omega, recalling the Gospel passage: "Before Abraham was, I am." The Savior's enemies are pictured as roaring lions; the invocation, "Deliver Me from the jaws of the lion," occurs repeatedly in the Passiontide offices. The Cross shining resplendently reflects the patristic mentality of regarding Christ's suffering as a *beata passio*. His Cross is also a tree of life. The high priest of the Old Covenant was privileged to enter the dark chamber of the Holy of Holies once a year; but Christ entered and remains in the bright sanctuary of heaven after having passed through the dark night of suffering. His holy humanity is the ark of the New Covenant before which angels fall down and worship. At the bottom of the picture we see Jeremias weeping on the ruins of Jerusalem.

yet even there the Easter light shines through, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day (Easter)." When the Jews were on the point of stoning Jesus, He hid Himself (Passiontide and Easter motif). The *Offertory,* from one of the Pilgrim Psalms, voices our resolve to become spotless like our sinless High-priest.

By the *Communion* we are reminded that the Eucharist is a memorial of Christ's death. "This is My Body which shall be given up for you; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, says the Lord. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." The two oblation prayers focus attention on the fruits of the Sacrifice: our gifts should loosen the bonds of sin and confer the blessings of grace (*Secret*), while the Eucharist should bring unfailing assistance (*Postc.*).

3. Divine Office. At Matins we listen to homilies by two illustrious popes, St. Leo I and St. Gregory the Great. These sermons take on an added significance in that both were delivered during the liturgical services on Passion Sunday in St. Peter's at Rome, the first about 450, the other about 600. We must confine ourselves to a paragraph from each:

"Among all Christian celebrations, dearly beloved, the Easter mysteries are, as you know, the most excellent. In order to observe them worthily and properly, this whole period is so arranged as to effect our spiritual reformation. But these present days in particular require our entire devotion. For you are not unaware how these days are most intimately bound up with the most exalted proof of God's mercy. During this period the apostles, under inspiration from the Holy Ghost, rightly decreed a stricter fast that by a common sharing in the Lord's Cross we might thereby do something of that which He has done for us, as the apostle says: 'If we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him' " (St. Leo).

"Give heed, beloved brethren, to the gentleness which is God's. He who had come to take our sins away, said: 'Who of you can convict Me of sin?' He did not consider it beneath His dignity to show by an appeal to reason that He was no sinner — He who by the power of His divinity could pardon sinners. But it is, indeed, frightening to hear what He adds: 'Whoever is of God, hears the words of God. The reason why

you do not hear is that you are not of God. . . .' Ask yourselves, then, whether you are listening to God's words with the ear of the spirit, and you will immediately know whether you are of God" (St. Gregory).

During the day we should keep the Gospel story continually in mind. At dawn we repeat our Lord's words, "He who is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear is that you are not of God!" A sobering word at daybreak! Thus we are at once drawn into the battle of Light against darkness. At each Hour during the day we pray another sentence from the Gospel: "I have not a devil, but I honor My Father" (Prime). "I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and who judges" (Terce). "In truth, in truth I say to you, if anyone keep My word, He will never see death" (Sext).

Toward the end of the day we see the drama's tragic denouement, "The Jews took up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus concealed Himself and went out from the temple." At Vespers there is a joyous allusion to Easter: "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he was to see My day. He saw it and was glad."

4. The Veiled Cross. With Passion Sunday the Church begins to place greater stress upon the account of Christ's redemptive death. She seeks to fill our minds with thoughts of His sacred passion. I use the words "greater stress" for the memory of our Savior's death is actually the main object of Christian worship. Does not St. Paul say, "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until He comes again." The holy Sacrifice of the Mass, then, is the solemn proclamation of Christ's holy death. As often as we gather for Mass, it is to voice our conviction: Christ died for us, the blood of His Sacrifice flows even today for our souls, and the flesh of His Sacrifice is this very day our nourishment unto divine life.

I use the words "greater stress" for throughout the whole of Lent the theme of suffering is present, though in a much different manner than that proposed by current piety. It is the battle of Christ with hell, His wrestling with the devil for the

souls given Him by the Father. That is one of the major veins of thought which run through the entire season.

Recall again Lent's three main phases. The first Sunday — Christ and the devil; Christ on the defensive. The third Sunday — the strong man and the stronger One; Christ on the offensive. Palm Sunday — Christ victor and king in His sacrificial death. Remember, too, that this battle was not finished 1900 years ago, it continues till the end of time. This Christ, struggling, battling, winning is the mystic Christ in His Body, the Church, and in His members, individual Christians. So Lent is a "holy crusade" in which we are active participants, not merely pious observers.

This day marks the beginning of Passiontide, a time in which we are to meditate more intensely on Christ's suffering. It is the time of which Christ says: "When the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then they will fast" (Matt. 9:15). What, more specifically, constitutes this commemoration of Christ's sacred passion?

Here I must again remind my readers of the profound difference between the ancient Christian approach and the modern. How does popular piety present Christ's suffering? It proceeds to review Holy Week historically; it pictures with great fidelity the various scenes of the "bitter passion," it dissects all the feelings and thoughts of our suffering Savior, it evokes bitter tears of compassion; it analyzes the virtues displayed by the Lord at every phase of His suffering. How shall I imitate Him . . . what can I learn from Him? are its most important questions. Finally, it makes suffering the great motive for moral amendment: "He died on the Cross for me, and I have offended Him so deeply."

Now what was the approach of ancient Christian piety as found in the liturgy? It followed an entirely different course. To be sure, it too put Christ's historical sufferings in the place of vantage, but it did not stop there. More important was the purpose and goal of Christ's passion, the historical context took a second place. By His suffering Christ *redeemed* us and

made us *children of God*. These are the happy truths of Christianity.

Therefore, the liturgy did not seek to elicit bitter tears, it could even rejoice. On what apparently is the most tragic day of the whole year, on Good Friday, during the veneration of the Cross, we are able to lift our voices in jubilant song: "See, because of this wood joy has come into the whole world!" Christians of an earlier age, therefore, were not prone to speak of the *bitter* passion, but of the *beata passio,* the happy or blessed passion.

The liturgy does not focus attention upon the human side of the passion as much as upon its goal, our salvation. Ancient Christian art was not satisfied with depicting the sufferings of Christ but rather perceived in them the reality of redemption. Whereas since the Middle Ages Jesus has been commonly pictured at the scourging pillar, in His agony, or on the Cross writhing in deathly pain, the ancient Church exalted the Cross as the sign of victory and redemption, the *crux gemmata,* the cross set with jewels and made with precious metal, without the figure of the Crucified. These two types of crosses may well be regarded as symbols of the two approaches to Christ's sacred passion, the two major types of Christian piety.

When we come to Church today, we will find the crosses veiled. What is the reason for this? Why should the Cross be veiled at the very time when we should be giving greater thought to the crucifixion? Just the contrary would be more intelligible. The Cross could be veiled at any other season of the year but this one.

Now what we have been blindly doing for centuries is a relic from an ancient practice. When crosses, without the corpus, shone glorious with gold and precious stones, there was deep meaning in the practice of veiling their brilliance during the days when the Bridegroom was taken away. The Church had put on her widow's weeds. And it is far more refined to present her this memorial of her beloved than to hold out a body writhing in torment on the Cross. In any

case the former corresponds better to the noble instincts of past generations.

It is clear, then, that objective piety also has a reminder of Christ's passion, but one of a different nature.

Here are a few more differences between popular piety and liturgical piety. The former is doctrinaire and sentimental; the latter proceeds from fact. Liturgical piety does not tend to isolate virtues and examples for imitation; each person feels himself a member of the Body of Christ, and sees in earthly misfortunes, for instance, a participation in his Savior's sufferings. What does St. Paul, a teacher of objective piety, say? "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also through Christ does our comfort abound" (2 Cor. 1:5).

Yes, the apostle even sees in his own sufferings an extension or completion of Christ's sufferings (Col. 1:24). A marvelous outlook! My whole life as a Christian is bound up with Christ; my suffering and my joy are Christ's. Into the whole world Paul sent this jubilant cry, "With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. Therefore it is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Objective piety does not lack warmth; it too possesses a highly developed mysticism of suffering derived from the consciousness of union with Christ.

So what are we to do? Are we to abandon the concept of suffering to which we have been accustomed since earliest childhood? And turn to the objective approach? That is not necessary. Rather we should deepen our previous ideas by the theology of suffering found in the ancient Church. "Test all things; hold fast that which is good," says the apostle (1 Thess. 5:21). In the Church both views are common — therefore both are recommended. I wanted to call your attention to the differences, not to criticize and reject the one, but to offer you a chance to probe more deeply.

When on next Friday we keep the Feast of the Seven Dolors and pray the beautiful *Stabat Mater*, we will recognize at

once the newer type of piety. Today, however, as we read the Epistle on the divine High-priest entering into heaven's sanctuary at the price of His own blood to effect our eternal redemption, we will know that the liturgy is recommending an objective consideration of suffering. Mother Church is like the householder in the Gospel parable who brings out from his treasures new wine and old. Once again let us "test all things and hold fast that which is good."

MONDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. Chrysogonus

Cross and baptism

Christ goes to His death, a victim of Jewish hatred, in order to atone for the sins of the Ninivites (the Gentile catechumens) and to bring them the "living water" of baptism and the Eucharist.

The key antiphons: "On the great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried out, saying: If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (Ben. Ant.). Always keep in mind that in the liturgy Christ's words are not mere quotations — He is present and speaks directly to us! "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink. From within him there shall flow

In the center of the design stands the standard of the "King of glory" (Comm.), to the left grapes and a winepress (Christ; cf. Intr.: "Men have trodden Me under foot"). From the winepress of the sacred passion flows the Eucharistic wine to those who desire it (Gosp.). To the right is the king of Niniveh who stepped down from his throne and did penance. Architecture and ornamentation is Assyrian in style.

rivers of living water, says the Lord" (Magn. Ant.). With eagerness let us look forward to the paschal feast as did the catechumens.

1. Station. About St. Chrysogonus, patron of today's station, the Martyrology says on November 24: "The death of the holy martyr Chrysogonus. Because he courageously professed his faith, he was subjected to bonds and imprisonment for a long time and then dragged to Aquileia at the command of Diocletian. There he was beheaded and cast into the sea, and thus obtained the martyr's crown" (c. 304).

The house where St. Chrysogonus lived became the property of the Roman Church. In the fifth century it was rebuilt to serve as a church; in the course of centuries further alterations took place.

2. Holy Mass (Miserere mihi). Already at the *Introit* we unite ourselves to our suffering Lord. We and He are one, the mystic Christ. All three chants come from the lips of the suffering Savior. It is important to recognize this so that we may permit Christ to suffer, lament, and die in us, as well as to rise again. We will be celebrating Easter liturgically if we observe the passion and resurrection "Through Him and with Him and in Him."

In strong, realistic terms the Introit antiphon, "Men have trodden Me under foot," reminds us that Christ is the divine Grape in the winepress of suffering, from whence flow the waters of salvation. If we actually realized our oneness with Him, we would not resent being trodden upon. Compare the beginning of this Mass with its conclusion. What contrast! "The Lord of heavenly hosts, He is the King resplendent with glory!" (*Comm.*). It is another way of stating Christendom's great law — through suffering to glory.

In the *Lesson* Jonas prefigures Christ, and the Ninivites the catechumens (Gentiles). Note how the *Gospel* stands in contrast to the Lesson; the Jews sought to kill God's messenger to them. The reference to water (baptism and confirmation) undoubtedly was meant for the catechumens. As penitent Ninivites we assemble for the holy Sacrifice and with contrite

hearts approach the altar at the Offertory, praying a penitential psalm.

The *Communion* focuses our thoughts upon the goal, the "King of glory" in His resurrection and second coming. The *Postcommunion* again brings out a theological point, viz., participation in the saving sacrament (in the old Christian sense of *mystery*) effects spiritual cleansing and healing (*purificationem et medelam*).

3. Jonas and Christ. The two lessons complement each other by contrasting Christ's reception with that of Jonas. a) On ancient Christian monuments no Old Testament figure occurs more often than Jonas. The booklet bearing his name develops a story with three highlights, the prophet's sea voyage, his sermon on penance in Niniveh, and the incident of the ivy stalk. Today's lesson is concerned with the second. But we can extend our meditation to cover all three. The most exciting probably is Jonas' sea voyage. If you have an Old Testament read the passage, it is not lacking in human interest.

Jonas desired to escape from a task God was imposing; he did not want to preach penance in Niniveh, knowing that God would pardon its inhabitants. But he failed in evading an

all-seeing God. A storm arose and threatened to bury ship and voyagers. Realizing that the gale was God's punishment, Jonas said to the sailors, "Take me and throw me into the sea! Then the sea will stop harming you!" They did throw him into the sea, and the storm subsided! But Yahweh had sent a great fish to swallow Jonas. In its belly the prophet stayed three days and three nights. When Jonas began to pray, the Lord commanded the fish to disgorge him upon the shore.

From Christ Himself we have an authentic explanation of this Old Testament figure, "As Jonas was in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). It is not our task to probe into the apologetic problem regarding the historicity or the possibility of this occurrence. The word of Christ is so holy for us that we will restrict our study to its typical implications. The "Sign of Jonas the Prophet," i.e., Christ's death and resurrection, will be the predominant theme during the coming weeks.

But the second incident in this book of prophecy, that described in today's Lesson, likewise has symbolic meaning. In the Gospel Christ continues His sermon, "The men of Niniveh will rise up on judgment day against this generation and will accomplish its destruction; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. 12:41).

Here Jesus contrasts the Ninivites with the unbelieving Jews. Today's liturgy has developed this contrast farther. In the Ninivites ancient Christian symbolism saw the catechumens (Gentiles). We too should follow their example and do penance.

b) The Gospel stands in intentional contrast to the Lesson. The heathen Ninivites did penance upon the preaching of Jonas; the Jews remained hard of heart, even to the point of seeking to kill God's messenger. Therefore, even as the Jews feared, Christ turns to the Gentiles and calls them.

The catechumens present are from the Gentiles. They resemble the Ninivites — Christ "came to them and taught

them." They, the thirsty, accept His invitation; they "drink living water" (baptism) and "receive the Holy Ghost" (the catechumens in confirmation, the faithful in the holy Eucharist). The Ninivites deserved to be called the "people of God" by reason of their conversion; but Israel, because of her obstinacy, forfeited her privilege and ceased to be God's "chosen people."

This contrasting of Jew and Gentile should cause us to stop and reflect — we, the people of God, may suffer a similar fate. It would be well if we called to mind repeatedly that heterodox Christians and non-believers often have better natural gifts and virtues than we; that these people, without grace, perform good acts more selflessly than we who so often work only for reward.

TUESDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. Cyriacus -

The divine Daniel in the lions' den

The Tuesday Masses have their own peculiar stamp. The Lesson usually stresses action, while the Gospel is doctrinal

The design. Ancient Christian art frequently resorted to symbolism or type to portray the passion and death of Jesus. One such Old Testament figure was Daniel in the lions' den.

and simply explains the Lesson with reference to Christ. The faithful are in the foreground rather than the catechumens. The stational saints, models of heroic love of neighbor (deaconesses or deacons), are frequently depicted in the Lesson. All this is the case with today's Mass, except that the passion theme is strongly emphasized.

The key antiphons: "My time has not yet come, but your time is always at hand" (Ben. Ant.). "Go up now to this feast. I am not going up, however, for My time has not yet come" (Magn. Ant.). It is only a short while before our Savior's passion; the Church therefore stresses the fact that we are approaching the time of Christ's death.

1. **Stational Church.** St. Cyriacus, the stational saint, was a deacon who suffered martyrdom about the year 300. "After a long and painful imprisonment he was covered with pitch and stretched upon the rack; his joints were torn from their sockets and his whole body beaten with sticks. Finally, at the command of Maximian, he was beheaded with twenty companions. Their feast is celebrated on August 8."

The saint had provided for the bodily needs of Christian prisoners, had furnished them with food and drink. On one occasion he was to heal the daughter of the Persian king in Babylon (perhaps this circumstance brought about the selection of the passage on Habacuc and Daniel). The original stational church disappeared centuries ago, and its site has twice been changed. In 1588 Pope Sixtus V transferred the stational service to the Church of St. Mary in Via Lata, where the head of St. Cyriacus is now honored. (Such transference may afford some justification for celebrating the station in our parish churches.)

2. **Holy Mass (Exspecta).** Mother Church bids us be patient and "wait" the short time until Easter (*Intr.*). The light of the resurrection is already shining from afar and my response is: "One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek: To dwell in the house of the Lord."

Daniel in the lions' den (*Lesson*) is a type of the suffering Christ; we may think of His agony on the Mount of Olives,

where an angel strengthened Him (Habacuc); or we may reflect on the Eucharist, which brings us strength in the lions' den of Lent. But, as Daniel was victorious over his enemies, so Christ triumphs in His resurrection. Daniel in the lions' den was one of the favorite pictures used in the cemeteries of the ancient Church. Frequently the prophet stands erect, flanked by two lions, a figure of Christ in His passion or the Church persecuted by enemies. With Christ we beg for Easter light over the holy mount of the sacred sepulcher (*Grad.*).

The *Gospel* account gives another picture of the persecuted and suffering Savior. The Jews wished to kill Him, His own brethren did not understand Him. He goes to Jerusalem alone. That city will be His den of lions. Even at the present time in holy Mass "He does not go up to the feast openly, but as it were, concealed" upon the altar.

The *Offertory* comes as the cry of a poor man who intends to make good use of the fruit of Christ's suffering. At the *Communion* it is Jesus speaking during His passion. Note the *Prayer over the People*: "Make us obey Your will in patience so that Your people may increase both in merit and in number." There should be interior progress as well as external expansion in the Church. The *Communion* psalm (24) is best known as an Advent psalm (See *The Church's Year of Grace,* Wednesday of the first week in Advent).

3. Daniel and Christ. A good title for today's Mass would be "Comfort the Suffering Christ by Almsgiving." Two points, then, are stressed: almsgiving and the passion.

a) Daniel in the lions' den. When the early Christians wanted to depict the passion and death of Jesus, they did not draw a cross and attach a corpus. They employed a more subtle approach, using perhaps a symbol (e.g., an anchor) or a Biblical story. Of the latter a favorite was Daniel in the lions' den, the prophet pictured standing with outspread arms, flanked by two lions. It was a kind of veiled cross for the ancient Church. Such pictures are often found on ancient Christian monuments. They serve as the key to our Lesson, we must not overlook its Christian interpretation.

The Gospel develops this message. Christ, the divine Daniel, comes to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews resolve to kill Him, they surround Him like lions. They make His holy city a lions' den. Even his own brethren fail to understand and do not put full faith in Him. The Gospel describes the situation in Jerusalem while the chants show the spirit in which Christ suffered.

The divine Daniel in the lions' den! Though agony fills His soul He is full of confidence: "The Lord is My light and My salvation, whom should I fear? . . . When evildoers come at Me to devour My flesh, My foes and My enemies themselves stumble and fall." But a feeling of utter abandonment presently fills His soul, "Do not in anger repel Your servant. . . . Do not abandon Me to the fury of My oppressors; for false witnesses have risen up against Me, and such as breathe out violence" (Ps. 26). "Deliver me, O God of Israel, from all My troubles" (Ps. 24).

b) Habacuc, the Helper. The stational saint today is the deacon Cyriacus, one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Prompted by liturgical motives he interested himself in the poor, often visited Christians imprisoned in dungeons or lions' dens (as prisons were then called), and provided them with heavenly and bodily food. In the person of Habacuc, today's liturgy has erected for him a veiled but lasting monument.

"Now there was in Judea a prophet called Habacuc. He had just cooked some gruel and had put bread crumbs in a dish and was going into the field to bring it to the reapers. Then an angel of the Lord said to Habacuc, 'Take the dinner that you have to Daniel in Babylon; for he is in a lions' den.' Habacuc replied, 'Lord, I have never seen Babylon and do not know the den.'

"Then the angel of the Lord seized him by the hair of his head, carried him away, and set him down with the quickness of thought in Babylon, above the den of lions. Habacuc cried: 'Daniel, servant of God, take the food that the Lord has sent you.' And Daniel said: 'O God, You have remembered me. Never indeed do You abandon those who love You.' Daniel

arose and ate. But the angel of the Lord quickly transported Habacuc back to his own dwelling-place."

c) Now we are ready to correlate the theme of Christ's suffering with that of almsgiving. Note first that Christ's passion is continued in His mystical Body, the Church, and that the poor and needy are His tortured members. Almsgiving then, both physical and spiritual, alleviates the passion of the mystical Christ.

Suddenly the connection becomes clear. Now, if ever, we too should resemble Habacuc (or Cyriacus) and help a neighbor in trouble. Because of his environment many a Christian lives in a lion pit, and it is true almsgiving to comfort such a person and inspire him with courage and confidence. Just call to mind how much bodily and spiritual distress prevails in every continent. Unemployment, lack of faith, immorality, hostile prejudice. Comforters and helpers are bitterly needed. Be a twentieth century Habacuc!

WEDNESDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. Marcellus

The Good Shepherd gives life but demands obedience in return

The Good Shepherd expects His sheep to observe His commandments, but in return He bestows upon them eternal life. And for their benefit He embraces the bitter Cross.

The key antiphons: "My sheep hear My voice, and I, the Lord, know them" (Ben. Ant.). "Many good things I have done for you. For which of these do you plan to kill Me?" (Magn. Ant.).

In the rising sun we see a figure of the Good Shepherd whose voice we are soon to hear. In the setting sun we recognize a premonition of His death. The Mass formulary, a very ancient one, beautifully combines the motifs of baptism and suffering in the person of our Good Shepherd.

1. Holy Mass (Liberator meus). The Christian community with its catechumens proceeds to the church of Pope St. Marcellus, whose feast is celebrated on January 16. This station is one of the old titular churches from the fourth century; due to repeated renovation little remains of the original structure. Beneath the high altar stands an urn of green basalt containing the relics of St. Marcellus which was placed there in the ninth century.

Today the catechumens were examined on the commandments which they had received two weeks previously (let us scrutinize our own conscience). The *Lesson,* therefore, contains a selection from the Bible on God's law. The *Introit,* uttered by Christ, bespeaks great suffering while at the same time it shows strong hope in deliverance (resurrection). God will be a "liberator from the furious heathen" (think of the crowning with thorns) and from the "evil man" (Judas). Christ's sufferings are depicted figuratively in Psalm 17, but in the very midst of extreme affliction the heavenly Father remains His love, His rock, and His fortress.

It is difficult to decide whether the *Gradual* comes from the lips of Christ or from the catechumens. In either case it expresses gratitude over the approaching resurrection. The *Gospel* presents another "passion" scene. During the feast of the dedication of the temple the Jews surround Jesus. They are not His sheep, they do not hear His voice or believe in Him as do the catechumens and the faithful, who in baptism and the Eucharist receive eternal life from Him. These wolves may destroy the Shepherd, but they will not rob Him of His sheep.

We continue to carry the picture of the suffering Christ with us in the *Offertory,* and allow Him to voice His sorrow through us. At the *Communion* we flock about our Good Shepherd as innocent lambs (Ps. 25).

2. The Figure of the Good Shepherd. The Church places before us the figure of the Good Shepherd, so common in ancient liturgy, and stresses three aspects of His work: "My sheep hear My voice . . . I give them eternal life . . . no

HOLY GOD, HOLY STRONG ONE,
HOLY IMMORTAL ONE!
HAVE MERCY ON US.

man can snatch them out of My hand." This constitutes the burden of today's holy Mass.

a) The sheep (the catechumens) received God's commandments two weeks ago. Since then they have been following the Good Shepherd, and today they must pass a test. The main question will be: will they always remain docile members of Christ's flock, listening obediently to His voice? This question holds for us too, the faithful. We know that God's law (Christ's voice calling) is not a heavy yoke for us Christians, by it our Shepherd is guiding us away from wrong paths.

Our "following" is made easier by the fact that the Good Shepherd trod all the hard and steep roads before us; we need only to follow in His footsteps. He Himself always fulfilled the will of His Father who sent Him; following Him should, therefore, come easy to us. And what is the principal content of His commandments? Love — toward God and neighbor. "I love You, O Lord, my strength." Follow the lead of today's liturgy and examine your conscience on "His commandment."

b) The Good Shepherd not only makes demands upon us, on His part He gives "life eternal." Yes, that is His great Easter present. For this He came into the world, for this He died and rose again — to obtain eternal life for us. It is this gift that the catechumens are looking forward to, and that the faithful renew and cherish. They will receive *vita aeterna* in baptism, while through the Eucharist they will nourish and perfect it.

c) And thirdly, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. The Gospel recounts how hostile Jews surrounded Him, their hands lifted to cast stones. His sufferings and His Cross were the purchase price for our eternal life in union with Him. "No one can now take them from My hand."

In every Mass the three Gospel texts just explained are fulfilled anew, for in the holy Sacrifice Christ again lays down His life for His sheep; in the Fore-Mass "His sheep hear His word," and at the sacred banquet "He gives them eternal life."

THURSDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. Apollinaris

The penitent woman washes Christ's feet

A week from today, on Holy Thursday, Jesus will perform the *mandatum* (washing His disciples' feet), He will institute the Holy Eucharist, and endure the agony in Gethsemane. The penitents, in deepest sorrow, will kneel at the door of the Church and wash, as it were, the Lord's feet with their tears. Their "Babylonian exile" will then be ended.

Today's Mass anticipates the reconciliation of the penitents; it is clearly penitential in character. Because of these reasons the key antiphons are not taken from the day's Gospel but from Holy Thursday: "The Master says: My time is near, I shall keep the Pasch at your house with My disciples" (Ben. Ant.). "Ardently have I desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer!" (Magn. Ant.). From morning to evening our thoughts keep reverting to the Last Supper.

1. Holy Mass (Omnia quae). We make our pilgrimage to the stational church of St. Apollinaris. The feast of this illustrious bishop of Ravenna, a disciple of St. Peter, occurs on July 23; he was likewise venerated in Rome, where the basilica dedicated to his honor became a stational church.

Both in mood and message the Mass shows remarkable unity. A spirit of penance characterizes the two Readings;

the penitent woman in Simon's house and the prophet Daniel in Babylon are contrite and full of tears, and we, as penitents, want to follow their example. The *Lesson* and three chants take us back to the Babylonian exile. Lent has often been compared to Israel's "70 year" exile, a symbolism suggested by the term Septuagesima, 70.

In the Lesson Daniel makes a moving appeal for forgiveness, "O God, do not destroy the covenant which we have broken by sin. Because of our sins we have been humiliated, but now receive us in the spirit of humility and with humble hearts. May our atonement sacrifices be pleasing to You. For now we resolve to serve You!" Try to pray these words with absolute sincerity.

Similar thoughts on penance are found in the *Introit*: "Your judgment upon us is just, for we have sinned — but now act mercifully." Psalm 118 expresses a deep desire for holiness of life, "Blessed are they whose way is blameless . . ." In their homeland the Jews had trampled upon the Law; now, in exile, they learned to love it. It was the sole bond that tied them to God, since "temple and sacrifice could not be found." (Nor may the penitents take part in the Sacrifice of Mass, they too are restricted to acts of penance and obedience in their worship of God.)

For the *Communion* chant the penitent congregation sings the moving elegy of homesick exiles, "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion. . . ." The faithful sing this song in the name of the penitents who were obliged to leave the church. We too long for the grace of pardon, for Easter. The Old Testament made the Chosen People aware of sin, disposed them to accept due punishment, and filled them with sorrow. The New Testament goes much farther, it grants pardon.

The *Gospel* tells the story of Mary Magdalen's conversion. (Contrary to present day exegesis, St. Gregory the Great and some liturgical texts identify the woman in today's Gospel with Mary Magdalen.) "When I think of Mary Magdalen's spirit of penance I would rather weep than speak. One must

have a heart of stone not to be moved to penance by the tears of this sinner!" (St. Gregory).

Our Savior, a friend of sinners! He accepts the pharisee's invitation to dinner and allows Himself to be slighted in order to pour the balm of pardon into a repentant soul, yes, in order to tell the world that He is happy to pardon all sinners. How comforting for any sinner, "She is forgiven much, because she has loved much." This penitent woman will forever remain a proof of Jesus' love toward sinners. What consolation! Now I know that past sin is no bar to spiritual progress; in fact, I may even surpass others through a greater love of Christ.

2. Babylon and the Penitent Woman. Two striking tableaus are put before us in today's Mass, viz., the Babylonian exile and the Penitent Woman. Both preach penance, the first shows its need and nature, the second how it brings forgiveness.

a) The Babylonian exile. Three chants (Introit, Offertory and Communion) and the Lesson transport us back to Israel in exile. Our life, particularly during Lent, resembles the Babylonian exile in many respects. Just take this one point of comparison, sin. The cause of the exile was sin, Israel's disloyalty to God. For centuries Yahweh had warned His people through the prophets. At last punishment could be delayed no longer.

But God heals even as He strikes. Exile was divinely decreed not merely as punishment, it was meant to improve and purify the Chosen People. Sin has made men live exiled from paradise. Life has become a vale of tears. Even the Redeemer did not wish to restore paradise to us, we must remain exiles on earth. The conclusion, then, is clear: we must regard the sufferings and restrictions of life as atonement for our sins.

And in Lent we should think first of the ordinary hardships and trials of life, and then of special, self-imposed mortifications. The former must first be met and mastered, "Let us conduct ourselves in all circumstances as God's ministers in much patience. . . ." Now we understand better what we are praying for in the Introit, "Everything that You have done to us, Lord, You have done justly; for we sinned against You and did not obey Your commandments."

Here is the true spirit of penance — no quarreling with fate, no envying the fortune of others. Rather we pray, "Lord, it is good that I am poor or sick, that I have this suffering to bear; I accept it all in the spirit of penance and submission." We will try to realize more vividly the significance of suffering as a means of atonement and spiritual growth.

This proper spirit of penance is taught by Daniel's lovely prayer which serves as today's Lesson. Part of the prophet's prayer, "In a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart may we be accepted by You, O Lord, and may our Sacrifice be so offered in Your sight this day as to please You . . . ," has been included in the Offertory prayers of holy Mass.

b) The Penitent Woman. The exile to Babylon educated the Jews to a true spirit of penance, but revealed little on divine forgiveness. The Old Testament merely made men aware of sin; the New grants pardon and peace. This very contrast brings home the sublimity of the New Covenant of grace. What a beautiful scene! A public sinner at Jesus' feet, "She brought an alabaster jar of ointment, and standing behind Him at His feet began to bathe His feet with her tears; she dried them with her hair, kissed them and anointed them with oil."

What comfort for every sinner comes from Jesus' words, "Therefore I say to you: her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven, loves little." And lastly, "Your sins are forgiven . . . Your faith has saved you; go in peace!"

3. The Prayers. No doubt the tender and human touches in today's Gospel, the passages on Israel's exile, and the two antiphons on the Last Supper offer rich material for spiritual meditation. But because many are so prone to overlook the four short Orations, permit me to propose them as a subject for further reflection. What do these four short prayers provide for my interior life?

The *Collect.* Because the dignity of human nature was impaired by yielding to immoderate desire, it may be restored by the medicine of self-denial (i.e., fasting). What a profound thought! In what new light bodily mortification appears! Adam's lack of temperance brought sin in its wake; we must therefore live temperately in order to overcome sin. Adam and Eve's gluttony profaned the nobility of human nature; our fasting will restore it.

Fasting, then, is medicine for a wound in human nature caused by the sin of our first parents. Fasting is here used in a broad sense; the Collect has the word *parsimonia* — parsimony, frugality, abstinence. The adverbial form occurs in the hymn: "*Utamur ergo parcius verbis, cibis, et potibus, somno, jocis* . . . Let us be more sparing in word, food and drink, sleep and amusement." Thus we see Lent in an entirely new light as *the* season of healing, the time to reform human nature wounded by original sin.

The *Secret* centers attention upon the gifts of sacrifice, bread and wine. These products of nature ordained by God to nourish us and to mend bodily frailty — these are what God requires as the principal gifts for the greatest sacrifice in His honor. At one and the same time these products of nature should aid us supernaturally here on earth and be a "sacrament" for life hereafter.

The *Postcommunion* rings familiar, the priest prays it daily

while purifying the chalice. Here it occurs in its original setting. The prayer distinguishes between the physical and spiritual aspects of holy Communion. One can receive the Eucharist merely on the lips, without taking It into one's heart. The holy species are a material gift, inasmuch as they are soon digested; but the spiritual effect can and should be lasting.

Prayer over the People. Again an excellent observation — we should be filled with horror for that which displeases God. What is unpleasant to its father, a child will also dislike; but this is not enough. A good child loves to do what its father wants done. The Church prays that I may become a "good child."

FRIDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. Stephen on the Caelian Hill

Jesus dies in order to assemble God's scattered children

Today it is difficult to decide whether to concentrate upon the older and more austere Lenten Mass or upon the newer, more spirited, festal Mass. The Lenten Mass very beautifully unites the two themes of baptism and suffering; reflection on Our Lady's Seven Sorrows prompts us to sympathize with Christ.

The key antiphons: "Now the festival day of the Jews was drawing near and the chief priests were seeking how they

might put Jesus to death; but they feared the people" (Ben. Ant.). "The chief priests took council together to kill Jesus; but they said: 'Not on the feast, or there might be a riot among the people'" (Magn. Ant.).

As was the case yesterday, these chants are not taken from the day's Gospel, but from the beginning of the passion narrative; the liturgy wishes to show how the chief priests were responsible for the murder of the Messiah, but also how helpless they were.

1. The Lenten Mass (Miserere mihi). We proceed today to the station church of Stephen, deacon and protomartyr. He who was first to follow our Lord in death should be our inspiration. The structure where we gather in spirit, an old rotunda, was consecrated by Pope Simplicius (468-483). The mosaic placed in the apse by Pope Theodore (643-649) may still be seen; viewing it brings us closer to those who kept the stational liturgy in ancient times. The event represented by the mosaic is the crucifixion; the bust of Christ towers above a Cross adorned with precious stones (a fine expression of today's stational Mass).

Into this church we come, repeating Christ's cry in deepest affliction (*Intr.*). Perhaps the sight of the Cross in the apse prompted the choice of Psalm 30 (prayed by Jesus on the Cross).

The *Collect* does not follow the usual pattern; conscious of sin and its effects we prefer to practice voluntary mortification here on earth rather than risk eternal punishment. Today for the first time Jeremias the Prophet speaks to us in the Lesson; he will be our Old Testament guide through Passiontide. Jeremias is not famous for verbal prophecies on the Messiah; rather in his own person he was a living figure of the suffering Savior. His lamentations, therefore, are Christ's. The Jews withstood him, they forsook the "stream of pure water" that he brought to them, whereas the "scattered children of God" seek it in baptism.

In the *Gradual* Christ complains about the insincerity and

hypocrisy of His enemies. The *Gospel,* which reports how the death sentence of Jesus was first decided upon, continues the account we listened to eight days ago on the resurrection of Lazarus. This miracle occasioned the memorable session of the Sanhedrin at which the high priest Caiphas uttered the prophetic words on Jesus' death for the redemption of men.

Caiphas was God's last representative under the old dispensation; in him the Holy Spirit was at work, even though he personally was unworthy. Malice and hatred, and hell itself must serve God in the execution of His plans, if He so wills. John propounds this great truth with genuine emotion, a truth which only the children of God can grasp. The blood of Christ will flow out beyond Israel; even the heathen (e.g., the catechumens present) will benefit by It.

It was our station saint who defended the universality of the Church against the narrow-mindedness of the Jews and laid down his life as martyr to the catholicity of God's kingdom. At that memorable session Christ's death had been decreed; nothing more was needed than a suitable opportunity to seize Him. But since "His hour had not yet come," Jesus went to the desert city of Ephrem,

The illustration is based on a mosaic in today's stational church. On the mosaic, however, the cross stands between the martyrs Primus and Felicianus (names given above their heads). The artist has substituted the usual abbreviation of the name, Jesus Christ. The inscription, *Salvum me fac,* i.e., Save me, is spread out to fill a band around the entire apse.

and passed a few days in quiet preparation for the end. About a week before His death He left for Jericho.

In the *Offertory* too we speak with our suffering Savior about His persecutors. The *Communion* reminds us of the false witnesses who rose against the Lord.

2. The Psalms—The Voice of Christ. Today all four chants are lamentations from the lips of Christ. Does the liturgy imply anything special by this? Certainly, for these responsories give the reflections of the participating congregation on the Mass action. They indicate the mood and thoughts which we should bear in our hearts all day long; for the Mass, the day's noblest action, must have a lasting effect. Now a few more detailed observations.

The *Introit* gives the proper spirit in which to come to church, the mood in which to approach the sanctuary while leaving the world behind — today it is "union with our suffering Lord." The *Gradual*, a recess between the two Lessons, reechoes the sentiments instilled; but this echo can and should sound on throughout the day — today it is the cry of Christ that keeps ringing in our ears.

We chant the *Offertory* while performing a most sacred action; its purpose is to ready us interiorly for sacrifice, today this sacrifice means sharing Christ's sacred passion. The *Communion* gives us an opportunity to think more profoundly on the Body of the Lord as well as on the day's peculiar mystery. When we eat of the sacred banquet we should realize that we are "proclaiming the death of the Lord."

Note also how all four chants use the first person; indeed, it is Christ who is lamenting and suffering, but by singing them with our own throats and lips we unite ourselves to Him, or, as members of His Body, lament with Him! Cardinal Schuster writes: When the Church desires to express the inward feelings of the Savior as He approaches His sacred passion, she uses the Psalter, her official prayerbook. The Gospels give a summary of the life and teaching of Jesus, but the songs of David lead us into His soul and reveal His virtues, the impulses of

His heart, His battles, His fears, and His ineffable love which united Him to His Father.

During His whole life our Savior used words from the psalms when He prayed to His Father; on the Cross the 21st psalm strengthened Him in His death agony. We may even call the Psalter the book from which the eternal High-priest prayed when He offered His mortal life as a holocaust to His father. It should be our task then to study zealously the spirit of the psalms, for through them we will come to know the soul of Christ.

3. The Seven Sorrows of Mary. Just one week before Good Friday the Church commemorates with a special feast the unspeakable sorrow that our Blessed Mother suffered beneath the Cross. It was then that Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled, "Your very soul a sword shall pierce." The feast is pervaded by overtones of tenderest mysticism on Christ's sacred passion. At times Mary is portrayed as a bride who lost her beloved. In other passages she foreshadows the Christian soul that loves Christ and sympathizes deeply with Him in His sufferings.

The Mass has a famous sequence, the *Stabat Mater*, certainly one of the finest religious poems from the Middle Ages. On some counts the formulary departs wholly from the traditional liturgical forms (e.g., the Introit without a psalm). The Breviary hymns are taken from the sequence.

To compare the somewhat austere ferial liturgy with the highly emotional festal Mass would be very instructive for anyone who desires to penetrate more deeply into the spirit of the Church's liturgy. The Passiontide Mass presents the suffering Christ in *prophecy* (psalms), in *figure* (Jeremias), and in *history* (Gospel, the decision to put Him to death); Jesus Himself speaks or the events are described objectively. Our emotions are not brought into play.

Very different is the spirit characterizing the feast of the Seven Sorrows. Here sentiment and emotion is strong. We see Christ's agony through the heart of His mother. She is our guide, she teaches us how to suffer and sympathize with her

Son. Where the ancient liturgy stops, the newer form begins; the old gives theology and history, the new stimulates our hearts and feelings. Thus one complements the other.

SATURDAY OF PASSION WEEK

Station at St. John at the Latin Gate

And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself

Today's Mass has the character of a Palm Sunday vigil. In ancient times this day had no liturgy of its own, like any day preceding a vigil service. That explains why the formulary contains no special chants. The Lessons anticipate Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter.

The antiphons: "Glorify Me, Father, in Your presence with the glory that I had before the world was made" (Ben. Ant.). "Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, I have known You, because You sent Me" (Magn. Ant.). Neither of these two major antiphons are from the Gospel of the day; they are taken from Christ's high priestly prayer after the Last Supper and resemble an offertory before the ascent to Calvary.

1. **Holy Mass (Miserere mihi).** On this day the Pope distributed his personal Lenten alms. Not until the ninth century do we find references to a stational church in honor of St. John the Evangelist at the Latin Gate. According to legend it marked the site where the Emperor Domitian cast the apostle into a kettle of boiling oil, from which he emerged unhurt.

The Readings and chants again describe Christ's sacred passion. The *Lesson* is a prayer by the prophet Jeremias, the Old Testament prototype of the suffering Savior. "Remember that I have stood (and still stand) in Your presence in order to speak good (i.e., to intercede) for them (i.e., all of us) and to turn away Your wrath." For all times and races Christ is the great Mediator and Intercessor. His Sacrifice is a continual call to heaven for mercy. The curse that follows in the prophet's discourse, Christ changed to: "Forgive them, for they know not. . . ."

The *Gospel* does not fail to reveal something of our Lord's

interior suffering. Only a few days remained before His death. In their blind folly the Pharisees had thought of killing Lazarus, the living witness to Jesus' divine power. The Gospel continues with John's description of the first Palm Sunday, how the multitude paid homage to their King as He approached the Holy City. Then while the Savior taught in the temple, Gentiles came to listen. Note the contrast: the Jews sought to kill their Messiah, while strangers desired to hear Him.

Their request occasioned a response that had both sad and joyful elements. In His mind's eye Jesus saw the dawn of the coming day of harvest, a dawn that brought sunshine into the dark night of suffering. Olivet and Tabor passed through His mind; the thought of His bitter death made His soul tremble; but the knowledge that thereby His Father would be pleased and man redeemed, filled Him with ineffable joy.

Immediately He proceeded to describe the fruit of His passion by the lovely figure of the grain of wheat. The divine grain of wheat must die and be planted in the ground. Next Saturday will be the great day of burial and rest for the divine seed. Then on Easter morning it will

The holy sepulcher is ready to receive the divine seed (a week from today will be Holy Saturday). Already we see the abundant fruit of which the Lord speaks. The Tau-cross with A and O symbolizes Christ's exaltation on Calvary by which He draws all things to Himself. He is constantly drawing the growing heads of grain closer to Himself until they share in His glory. This is indicated by the laurel wreath at the top.

break through the ground and bear fruit in glory. That will be the harvest.

The same truth is then stated more directly, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself"—a picture transcending time. The redeemed souls of every age are gathered about the Cross; I too am among those whom He has drawn to Himself. Thus the Gospel covers all the great days of the coming week: Palm Sunday, Good Friday ("lifted up"), Holy Saturday ("grain of wheat") and the glorious triumph of Easter (bears much fruit).

2. Christ's Last Days. Every person who loves Christ now tries his best to remain close to his suffering Savior during the last hours of His earthly life. The liturgy places us directly in the midst of the recorded events and expects us to participate. During these next days, therefore, we will traverse each road with Jesus.

Yesterday (Friday) He came with His disciples from the desert village of Ephrem to Jericho. When near the Jordan we heard from His lips the third prophecy of the crucifixion. Then Salome approached with her two sons, John and James, and begged important positions for them in the coming kingdom. This gave Jesus the opportunity to proclaim His wonderful teaching on humility. We stand close and listen.

The Lord enters Jericho. I am Zacheus, the chief publican, the little man who wants to see the Messiah from a tree. He looks up to me and says, "Today salvation has come to your house!" He stays two nights with me, a despised publican!

Over the Sabbath Jesus remains in Jericho. The next day (Sunday) He starts for Jerusalem at the head of a lordly caravan. Along the road there sits a blind beggar. It is I, again. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He heals my eyes, I see, I am enlightened!

In procession we pass through Jericho's inhospitable ravines up to Jerusalem. Night intervenes and Jesus stops at Bethany. He is joyously welcomed by Martha and Mary. Am I an active Martha or a meditating Mary? Possibly it was on this Sunday evening that the memorable meal took place when, with

Lazarus present and Martha as hostess, Mary poured out the costly ointment for Jesus' burial. It was the act which estranged Judas completely from his Master.

In solemn procession on Monday afternoon the King of Israel comes to the top of Olivet, weeps over Jerusalem, and then continues on to the temple. We feel ourselves part of this festive procession, waving palms in our hands. We accompany our King and watch Him drive the money-changers out of His Father's house. Tuesday morning He returns with His disciples and while crossing Mt. Olivet curses the unfruitful fig tree, a figure of the Jewish people. This barren tree is likewise a warning for us.

Verbal encounters with the Jews take place in the temple courtyard until Wednesday afternoon when Christ hurls His eightfold curse upon Pharisee and Jew, and leaves the temple forever. With His disciples He then proceeds to the Mount of Olives and delivers His powerful discourse on the end of the world and the destruction of Jerusalem. Present in spirit we hear this sermon and take to heart His final admonition, "Be vigilant!" Meanwhile Judas has left the circle of disciples and offers his assistance to the chief priests.

Thursday morning Christ sends Peter and John from Bethany into the city to make the needed preparation for the Passover meal. As evening falls He bids farewell to His mother and His friends and goes with His apostles to the Upper Room in Jerusalem for His "Last Supper" with them.—In mind and in heart we will follow our Blessed Lord closely during these sacred days of Holy Week.

Holy Week

Now we enter the holiest part of Lent. The Church has prepared us step by step for this sacred experience. A steady crescendo in the liturgy has been taking place since Septuagesima Sunday. Each week the sound rose higher, and louder. Although Mother Church often spoke about the Cross and the resurrection, she did so in veiled signs and figures, as if she feared exposing a most precious object to profane eyes. Not until this moment does she remove the curtain. Now we see the Holy of Holies; and more than that, we are asked to participate in the most sublime drama of religious history.

The greatest and holiest of weeks is about to begin. We should not call it a week of mourning, for Cross and resurrection are inseparable. Christ's redemptive work did not end with death, it continues on in the victory of His resurrection. Therefore, we must not separate the passion from the resurrection, but rather regard the Cross as the way to Easter victory.

The liturgy does not make this week one of sorrowful lamentation or tearful sympathizing with our suffering Lord. That was the medieval approach. No, through the whole week there runs a note of victory and joy, a realization that Christ's sacred passion was a prerequisite to Easter glory. We cannot understand the Church's liturgy unless we keep this in mind.

There is no day in the entire coming week when the theme of Easter and victory does not resound loud and clear. Think only of *Palm Sunday* with its homage to the King; of *Holy Thursday* with its solemn Mass and consecration of the Holy Oils; of *Good Friday* with the solemn exaltation of the Cross; of *Holy Saturday*, the beginning of the Easter solemnities.

Four days take on special importance, viz., Palm Sunday and the sacred Triduum. The remaining three days, Monday through Wednesday, do not differ radically from other days in Passiontide. Palm Sunday may be called the golden gateway leading to the holy mysteries of Easter.

A pure
SACRIFICE,
a holy
SACRIFICE,
an immaculate
SACRIFICE

SECOND PASSION SUNDAY or PALM SUNDAY

Station at St. John Lateran

The King leads His people to victory

1. Introduction. Palm Sunday, the gateway to Holy Week, is first of all, the great memorial to our Lord's solemn entrance into Jerusalem when He was about to suffer and to die. He did not fall, a victim to Jewish hatred; He went voluntarily to His death, with royal freedom. His death had been divinely decreed as the purchase price of man's redemption. This festive entrance was His wedding march as He proceeded to seal with blood His bridegroom's love for man.

Secondly, Palm Sunday is a feast in honor of Christ the King. It marks the first time during His earthly life that He allowed royal homage to be paid Him. In royal fashion He entered the "city of the great King." His kingship was the main reason why He was convicted and sentenced to die. He was, therefore, a martyr to His royal title.

But throughout the world the Church this day accords Him kingly homage. Into our hands the Church puts palms and olive branches, symbols of our loyalty to Him and of our willingness to do Him homage. Palm Sunday gives us an opportunity publicly to profess our faith in the King of kings.

Thirdly, Palm Sunday brings us face to face with suffering, for it introduces us to Christ's sacred passion, prepares us for His death on Calvary. We are to share our Master's burden, a task that becomes possible only if we ourselves are willing to become soldiers and martyrs. The liturgy therefore is quite dramatic. Christ is in our midst, and by our actions we proclaim ourselves His disciples. We accompany Him from Mt. Olivet (blessing of the palms) along the road from Olivet to the city gate of Jerusalem (procession with palms), into the Holy City itself (Mass, in the stational church).

The characters in this sacred drama are: (1) Christ. He is present on the Cross borne at the head of the procession or in the person of the priest. (In past centuries the figure of an ass carrying a statue of Christ was drawn along in a little cart; this was called the palm-donkey, an expression still current in certain places). (2) The band of apostles and disciples, viz., all present. Children especially play an important role, they represent the Jewish boys who cried "Hosanna to the Son of David."

This, then, is the profound meaning of Palm Sunday: Christ, the King of martyrs, enters upon His sacred passion in union with all martyrs and confessors, members of His Body the Church.

2. The Sacred Drama of Palm Sunday. *The Blessing of the Palms (or other Green Branches).* As the priest clothed in red vestments approaches the table on which the palm branches are lying, he is greeted with a song that sees in him the person of Christ:

> Hosanna to the son of David!
> Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
> O King of Israel: Hosanna in the heavens above!

Facing the people he proceeds to bless the palms with a single prayer; God's blessing is invoked and His aid is asked that "our hearts above all else may be attached to His merciful work of redemption." There follows a triple sprinkling with holy water and a triple incensation. This simple form for the blessing accord-

ing to the new rite has eliminated much from the previous ritual and leaves more time for the remaining service.

b) *The Distribution of the Branches.* Here, for the first time, do we have an official restoration of a practice common through many centuries. While the sacred ministers and the faithful are receiving the blessed branches, two psalms are chanted with an antiphon repeated after every second verse. This refrain arrangement makes it considerably easier for a greater number to join in at the chorus, while a more select group continues with the text of the psalm. Something of the tremendous impact of the whole when voiced by a large assembly may already be sensed when read in sequence:

The Jewish children took up olive branches and went forth to meet the Lord, shouting the words, "Hosanna in the heavens above!"

The Lord's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.
For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

The Jewish children took up olive branches and went forth to meet the Lord, shouting the words, "Hosanna in the heavens above!"

Lift up, O gates, your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may come in!
"Who is this king of glory?"
"The Lord, strong and mighty,
The Lord, mighty in battle."

The Jewish children took up olive branches and went forth to meet the Lord, shouting the words, "Hosanna in the heavens above!"

Lift up, O gates your lintels; reach up, you ancient portals,
that the king of glory may come in!
"Who is this king of glory?"
"The Lord of hosts; he is the king of glory."

The Jewish children took up olive branches and went forth to meet the Lord, shouting the words, "Hosanna in the heavens above!"

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

The Jewish children took up olive branches and went forth to meet the Lord, shouting the words, "Hosanna in the heavens above!"

The awareness of a joyous solemnity is mounting. By receiving the palm we proclaim ourselves ready for martyrdom, ready to accompany Christ Jesus, the King of martyrs, to His passion. It is our annual consecration to knighthood and martyrdom. They are sacramentals which bring redemptive graces, and they are symbols. The Redeemer is walking the road to Calvary, and we follow Him with palms in our hands.

c) *The Gospel Reading.* It is easily seen that the service would be incomplete without the story of our blessed Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. For that provides the model. At the opening words we fill our minds with the scene about the Holy City and take our places amid the throng. Alert and observant, we miss no detail.

d) *The Procession.* Mother Church sees that her children can wait no longer; the reading filled their minds with action, and they are ready to reproduce the scene. *Procedamus in pace*, her minister bids them. And all present respond: *In nomine Christi. Amen.* And as soldiers and martyrs of Christ do we accompany the Lord and King of martyrs into battle; in this lies the real significance of the rite. It is a march in which we join to honor the Conqueror over death and hell as He proceeds to the battlefield. We should play our part with genuine emotion. Imagine you are living in the age of martyrs. One of your companions is condemned to death for his faith, and the community accompanies him upon his last journey. With what reverence and awe you would march along!

The procession begins, the Cross in front. The lovely chants keep reminding us that we, as disciples, are accompanying our Lord, who has triumphed over death. What profound meaning there is in this procession: Christians are marching with Christ, a train of heroes and conquerors!

Like the angels and children,
may we too be found faithful,
singing out to the Conqueror of death:
"Hosanna in the heavens above!"

Crowds go out with flowers and palms
to meet the Redeemer;
worthy homage they pay to the Conqueror
who comes home in triumph.
All the world proclaims Him Son of God,
and the heavens re-echo their praises of Christ:
"Hosanna!"

All along the line of march appropriate antiphons, hymns, psalms come from the lips of Christ's attendants. The beautiful *Gloria, laus et honor tibi sit, Rex Christe Redemptor*, composed by Bishop Theodulf of Orleans while in prison (about 800) is retained in the restored rite; and the well-known melody *Pueri Hebraeorum* may be added between the verses of any appropriate psalm or song. Note in particular the homage paid to our King upon passing through the church's portals:

As the Lord was entering the Holy City,
the Jewish children proclaimed
the resurrection of Him who is Life.

To the Christians of Rome the portal of the church suggested the triumphal arches built for victorious generals. Today, Christ, the greatest of conquerors, passes through His arch of triumph. Adorn this entrance with palms, let the people know what is happening, give them a chance to participate. Externals are important too.

A final Collect said at the altar brings the "palm service" to a close. Our fidelity should be lasting, and as a sign to remind us we will take our blessed palm home with the assurance that "divine grace and blessing will rest wherever these branches are brought."

3. Holy Mass. The stational church, St. John Lateran, represents the Holy City Jerusalem which Christ and we, His disciples, have just entered. But why did Christ enter Jerusalem? To have Himself crowned? No, to suffer. Therefore the mood of the liturgy suddenly changes. The Mass formulary localizes us in the midst of the passion, fills us with compassion as we witness the sad spectacle. The picture steadily before us is that of the suffering Savior; the chants are laments from Christ's own lips. He is crying to His Father in utter loneliness. Three men speak the prologue to this drama on Calvary: the king and prophet, David (Introit, Tract, and Communion); the apostle of the Gentiles and herald of the Cross, Paul (Epistle); and the apostle-evangelist, Matthew (Passion).

a) David, the royal singer, intones the well-known Passion Psalm (21). According to the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and of the Church at large, yes, even of the Synagogue, this song is directly Messianic, i.e., it describes Christ's suffering in the first and obvious sense of the words. We may regard it as a vision in which David witnessed the scene on Calvary. The psalm is divided into three easily distinguishable parts: 1. Christ's Good Friday lament; 2. His physical suffering; 3. the comforting prospect of a blessed future.

The psalm becomes dearer to us when we recall that Jesus prayed at least one verse from it on the Cross, perhaps the entire psalm. It gives us the climax to the drama on Calvary, Christ's abandonment. As you pray the sacred verses stand in

spirit upon Golgotha and allow the sorrowful picture to make a deep impression. Of course, it is not possible to apply every word and figure to a definite historical scene in Christ's passion; for the psalmist has depicted with the brush of poetry the Redeemer's dreadful abandonment. He was wrestling with words and figures to express the dread realities revealed to him.

The mood in the first part at times reflects firm trust and confidence joined with self-sacrifice and obedience to the Father, and at times the extreme of helplessness and abandonment. In the second part varying scenes from the passion pass before us. In some verses the enemy is disguised as a savage animal; other verses prophesy the passion in the literal sense of the words: "They have pierced My hands and feet . . . They have divided My garments among them . . . Dry as a potsherd is My tongue."

In content and in tone the third part is strikingly different. The chalice has been drained to the dregs, and now the glory of resurrection pierces through the darkness. From the Savior's lips comes a song of gratitude over the world's redemption.

b) Paul, the great preacher of the Cross, next enters to speak his part. With grand lines he sketches the figure and work of the Crucified. It is a passage which ranks among the finest on the subject. The principal verse, "Christ became obedient to death, even to death on a Cross. Therefore God also has exalted him. . . ," will form the major antiphon summarizing the sacred passion on the last three days of the current week.

c) Matthew, the apostle, is the third speaker. He is the evangelist who best describes the humanity of our Lord in his account of the passion, portraying the Messiah's utter abandonment as foretold by the prophet David.

In some churches the passion account is sung solemnly by three priests, the first representing the evangelist, the second Christ, the third taking the roles of various individuals, while the choir acts the part of the people. In churches where this solemn chanting of the Passion does not take place, it may be read in the vernacular by several men with a similar distribution of parts. This latter method would seem to be of greater benefit to the

mass of faithful. For it is easier for them to listen to a dramatically read account than to read by themselves while the Latin is chanted in the sanctuary.

The Easter theme is not completely absent from the Palm Sunday Mass. The Epistle raises our sights beyond Good Friday to Christ's Easter radiance. In the Offertory and Communion our offering of bread and wine is related beautifully to our Savior's chalice of suffering. While the faithful carry bread and wine to the oblation table, they hear the words, "They put gall in My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." And when they approach to receive the holy Eucharist, the Church keeps repeating the verse: "Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Comm.). Note the added force these chants have when sung in context with their respective processions. Today's liturgy began on Olivet, and ends in Gethsemane.

If we scan the whole Palm Sunday service, we see that it leads us Godward in three stages. First we arrange a triumphal march for our King and Conqueror. But we do not let Him go forth to battle alone; blessed for the conflict, we accompany Him to His death in the Mass. Death, however, is no finale. Those who are Christ's loyal friends in life and in its battles, those who bear "the exalted name of God's Only-begotten before the kings and powers of this world" (Preface), shall certainly enter heaven, to rule with Him forever. This too is contained in the symbolic meaning of the procession with palms.

4. **Symbolism of the Palm Sunday Service.** In the actions and objects proper to today's liturgy the Church displays a rich symbolism, one deserving our special attention. The procession, for instance, "is more than a mere memory; for in it we are actually accompanying Christ *here and now*. How is that true? Because Christ is present in three ways; firstly, in mere symbol, on the Cross which heads the procession; secondly, in His representative the priest; thirdly, in all of us as a community gathered together in His name. We are the Church of this place; and Christ, according to His promise, is in the midst of us.

"But also this procession looks to the *future*. Christ, in His

redemptive work, passed from this world into heaven, which is called the New Jerusalem. If our church stands for the earthly Jerusalem of old, it stands also for the New Jerusalem of heaven. When Christ comes again at the end of the world, He will lead our risen bodies, now joined to their souls, into heaven. And so, as we enter now with Christ's representative, the priest, we should think of the day when we hope to enter heaven itself with Christ our King. Our procession is a kind of rehearsal, in a symbolic way, of our final passover on the Last Day.

"Now let us turn our minds from the future to the past. Christ and His followers entered Jerusalem, just as we now enter this church. But why did He go to Jerusalem? Was it to be crowned there as King? Not at all. He went there to suffer and die for our sakes, and to win through all His terrible passion and death to His resurrection. Our salvation depends on following Him: we must die with Him if ever we are to rise with Him. And therefore in the official prayer of the Mass, which the priest lays before God as our spokesman, we ask that "with the lesson of His endurance before us, we may be found worthy to have fellowship in His resurrection." How earnestly we should add our *Amen* to that prayer.

"And at the end of it all we take our palms home, and reverently place them behind our crucifix; and we would do well to use the palms of all the members of our family, placing them in the living room, the kitchen, the bedrooms, the garden — in any place where we pass our time — that they may remain there throughout the year. Why should we do that? Because at the end of the procession the priest says this prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, our King and Redeemer, we have carried these branches and sung solemn praises in Thy honor. Graciously let Thy grace and blessing rest wherever these branches are brought; with the power of Thy right hand defeat every evil influence and deception of the devil while granting Thy protection to those whom Thou hast redeemed; who are living and reigning with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.'

"The palms are not instruments of magic; they are not like

superstitious amulets supposed to possess any power or virtue of their own; but they are the visible signs of the powerful prayer of God's Church which calls down the blessing of God upon all the places where they are put. We who have faith in the Church should have faith in her prayers, and make use of their power to our sanctification and protection" (from *Preparing for Easter* by Father Howell).

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Station at St. Praxedes

Mary of Bethany and Judas

One of the peculiarities of the Roman liturgy is its fondness for counting the days intervening until a feast. Thus on the fourth Sunday of Lent we heard, "The Passover is near!" On Passion Sunday, "Fourteen days until Easter!" And today, "Six days before the Pasch. . . ." This is the main reason why the Gospel on the anointing at Bethany was chosen.

The key antiphons for the coming three days are not from the Gospel of the Mass; rather they accent some scene from the passion, because the Church would have us remain throughout the day in closest union with our suffering Lord. "Father, glorify Me with Yourself, with the glory that I had before the world existed" (Ben. Ant.). "I did not turn away My face from those who cursed and spit upon Me" (Prime). "As the

The design. Our blessed Redeemer gave His body to Magdalen to be anointed, but to Judas to receive the traitor's kiss.

price for Me they paid thirty pieces of silver. This paltry sum was all that I was worth to them" (Sext). "You would have no power over Me, unless it were given to you from above" (Magn. Ant.).

The day's principal mystery is the anointing at Bethany.

1. **Holy Mass (Judica).** The station originally was the Church "de fasciola," which according to an old legend took its origin from an incident during St. Peter's flight from Rome at the time of Nero's persecution. This is the story. The apostle had come to the first milestone on the Appian Way when the bandage (*fascia*) covering his foot-wounds (due to prison chains) became loose. Suddenly the Lord appeared to him. Peter asked, "*Domine, quo vadis*? (Lord, where are you going?)" Jesus answered, "I go to Rome, to be crucified again." Ashamed, Peter returned to the city.

Beneath the altar rest the bodies of the holy martyrs Nereus, Achilleus, and Domitilla. Later the station was transferred to St. Praxedes, a church dedicated to a virgin who devoted herself wholly to acts of charity toward her neighbors and to caring for martyrs: "Some she hid in her house, some she exhorted to profess the faith courageously, others she buried. To all who languished in prison she brought whatever they needed. When she no longer could witness the cruel oppression of the Christians, she besought the Lord, if it were His will, to take her from this valley of tribulation. This was granted. On July 21 God summoned her to receive a heavenly reward in return for her love of neighbor and holiness of life."

The passion motif is dominant throughout the Mass. All the chants, prayers, and Readings tell of Christ's suffering and death. Already at the *Introit* which, like most of the chants (*Grad.* and *Comm.*) is taken from Psalm 34, we join Christ in His appeal for help against godless oppressors. It was Christ Himself who gave this psalm its Messianic application, "The word written in their law must be fulfilled, 'They have hated Me without cause' " (John 15:25).

The *Collect* takes Christ's passion as its theme, "May we be revitalized through the sufferings of Your only-begotten Son."

A selection from Isaias, a prophet well known for his "Servant of Yahweh" poems on the Messiah and His passion, serves as the *Lesson*. The suffering Christ speaks: "I gave My body to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked them. I did not turn away My face from those who cursed and spit upon Me." The passage brings to mind the crowning with thorns. The Redeemer continues, exhorting us to bear our crosses full of trust and confidence.

The *Gospel* describes the memorable meal in Lazarus' house. Mary anoints Jesus' feet for His "burial" and wipes them with her hair. Judas becomes rude and is reprimanded. Jesus' rebuke hardens him for the betrayal. Thus the occasion became a funeral feast that brought death (Judas) and prepared the tomb (Mary).

At this point the Church would have us turn to the stational saint, Praxedes (feast on July 21). She was a consecrated virgin of the ancient Roman church who by distributing her wealth among the poor had anointed the feet of the Lord. Thus in a veiled way the Gospel venerates a bride of Christ. Now in the holy Sacrifice we participate in our Savior's funeral feast and "wipe the feet of the Lord."

For the *Offertory* we sing Psalm 142, a penitential psalm which contains various references to the passion. The antiphon stresses submission to God's holy will. We seem to be hearing the prayer on Mt. Olivet, "Not My will but Yours be done!"

2. Mary and Judas. Today the liturgy presents two noteworthy characters who play dissimilar roles in the Lord's passion. One fills us with solace and comfort; the other with uneasiness and wholesome fear. Their juxtaposition produces a powerful effect by way of contrast. The two characters are Mary of Bethany and Judas.

Jesus is in the house of Lazarus, at dinner. Mary approaches, anoints the feet of her Savior for His burial and dries them with her hair. Judas resents her action and resolves upon his evil course. These two persons typify man's relation to Christ. He gives His Body to two types of individuals: to Magdalens to be anointed, to Judases to be kissed; to good persons who

repay Him with love and service, to foes who crucify Him. How movingly this is expressed in the Lesson: "I gave My body to those who beat Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked them. I did not turn away My face from those who cursed and spit upon Me."

The same must hold true of His mystical Body. Down through the ages Christ is enduring an endless round of suffering, giving His body to other Marys for anointing and to other Judases to be kissed, beaten, and mistreated. Augustine explains how we can anoint Christ's body:

"Anoint Jesus' feet by a life pleasing to God. Follow in His footsteps; if you have an abundance, give it to the poor. In this way you can wipe the feet of the Lord."

The poor are, as it were, the feet of the mystical Christ. By aiding them we can comfort our Lord in His mystical life, where He receives Judas' kisses on all sides — the sins of Christians.

The Gospel account may be understood in a very personal way. In everyone's heart, in my own too, there dwell two souls: a Judas-soul and a Mary-soul. The former is the cause of Jesus' suffering, it is always ready to apostatize, always ready to give the traitor's kiss. Are you full master over this Judas-soul within you? Your Magdalen-soul is a source of comfort to Christ in His sufferings. May the holy season of Lent, which with God's help we are about to bring to a successful conclusion, bring victory over the Judas-soul and strengthen the Magdalen-soul within our breasts.

3. The Divine Office. Those who are interested in the liturgy will make use of every opportunity to prepare well for all Holy Week services. In religious communities this preparation has long been under way. Pastors too will have worked out a spiritual schedule for Holy Week early in Lent. Final preparations will occupy our time today and tomorrow. Let us devote some minutes to a general view of Matins and Lauds on the last three days of Holy Week.

What are Matins? Matins are a part of the Church's official prayer, the Divine Office or the Breviary. The Hour of Matins

is the Church's nocturnal prayer, her meditation on the morrow's feast. The sentiments in her heart, the mystery peculiar to the day, find expression in Matins. Since the last three days of Holy Week are the year's most eventful days for us Christians, we may surmise that Matins will be unusually rich in content and beautiful in form. We will not be disappointed.

On these three days Matins may be compared to a drama in three acts on the passion of Jesus. The first act, on Holy Thursday, is the beginning and introduction to the great story; the underlying theme is the passion from the viewpoint of its causes and inner nature. The three most important scenes are 1) the agony on Mt. Olivet, 2) the betrayal of Judas, and 3) the institution of the holy Eucharist.

The second act, Matins of Good Friday, brings us to the climax—the ineffable mystery—on Golgotha. The third act releases some of the tension; Matins on Holy Saturday resemble the calm after a storm. Gradually our souls are lifted up in hope for a resurrection, then quickly relapse into tears and cries upon seeing the gaping wounds of the dead Jesus.

Lack of space makes it impossible to treat in greater detail the many excellent characteristics of Matins on these three days. Permit me, however, to direct your attention to the Lamentations and responsories. The Lamentations are religious dirges by Jeremias the prophet; in them he pours out sentiments of most bitter grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of his people.

In Matins of Holy Week these Lamentations represent the remorseful lament of penitent mankind, God's unfaithful bride, for whom the Bridegroom now suffers and dies. The Church seeks to hold up a mirror before us so that we can behold the frightful misery of sin. Every lesson, therefore, ends with the awe-inspiring words: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord your God!"

The Lamentations are sung to a most poignant melody, one whose origin, perhaps as old as Jewish antiquity, is lost in the darkness of the ages. The solemn, protracted, continually repeated but never monotonous melody vibrates in our souls; it

has touched and shaken thousands of hearts and has occasioned the astonished admiration of most competent artists.

"How lonely now the city
once so full of people!
O all you who pass by, look and see
if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow . . .
To what shall I compare you, or to what shall I liken you,
daughter of Jerusalem?
Whom may I place beside you, to comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Sion?
For great as the sea is your sorrow!"

The responsories to the Lamentations are likewise sung with unusual solemnity. But first, what is the nature of a responsory? After a reading the Church does not pass on immediately to another, but inserts a chant to echo, as it were, the preceding lesson. The Mass affords a good example. After the Epistle comes an interlude, the Gradual. The responsories at Matins follow this pattern. Few parts of the service touch the heart more deeply. Now we hear laments from the lips of the suffering Savior, now mourning songs of the Church—with constant change of tone, some direct and simple, others lyrical, others intense and highly dramatic.

A few examples may help clarify these assertions. On Holy Thursday the Church reflects upon Judas and his evil deed:

"Judas, a wretched trader,
betrayed the Lord with a kiss.
The Lord, an innocent Lamb,
did not refuse the kiss from Judas.
For a handful of coins
he delivered Christ to the Jews.
It were better for him if he had never been born."

On Good Friday our thoughts are directed to Calvary:

"It became dark
when the Jews crucified Jesus.
About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice,
'My God, why have You forsaken Me?'

Then He bowed His head and gave up the spirit.
Jesus cried with a loud voice,
'Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.'"

During Matins of Holy Saturday the Church weeps at the tomb of her Bridegroom:

"Jerusalem, arise, and lay aside your garb of joy.
Clothe yourself in sackcloth and ashes,
for within your walls the Savior of Israel has been slain.
Let your tears flow in streams by day and by night,
give no rest to the pupil of your eye."

At the beginning of Matins there stands before the altar, in the middle of the sanctuary, a candelabra with fifteen candles, fourteen yellow and one white. At the end of each psalm one candle is extinguished (nine at Matins and five at Lauds) until only the white candle remains lit. With Matins and Lauds again being said in the early morning hours, this action again takes on its original practical purpose; for when Matins were said at night (hence the word *Tenebrae* (darkness), a lesser number of burning candles would be needed as daylight increased — and the end of a psalm provided an apt occasion for extinguishing another light. Later, symbolic meanings were attached to the practice. The yellow candles signified the disciples who fled, one after the other; the white candle, Jesus, whose light disappeared indeed for a short time at death, but shone radiant again on Eastern morn; and noise was

added to recall the earthquake at His resurrection (an action abolished by the 1955 Holy Week Reform).

Particularly impressive is the conclusion to this morning Office. After the candles, including those on the altar, have been extinguished, all kneel. A short antiphon is sung, "Christ became obedient for us unto death" (on Friday, "even to death on a Cross," is added, which on Saturday continues with, "therefore God also has exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name"). Thereupon follows the great penitential psalm, the *Miserere*. Before the image of the Crucified we awaken heartfelt sorrow and remorse for our sins. Then all rise and depart in deepest silence.

Whoever wishes to experience the full pathos of Holy Week must indeed participate intelligently in all its liturgy.

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Station at St. Prisca

The Lamb of God is led to slaughter

The climax to today's liturgy comes in the Passion according to St. Mark. We will prepare ourselves beforehand for a holy commemoration of our Savior's suffering and death. During

The picture brings out the two aspects of Christ's sacred passion. It was a *passio beata* (the source of supernatural life), and a *passio amara* (one of bitterest suffering). The *crux gemmata* with Introit text (salvation—life—resurrection) points to the former; the Lamb tied to the Cross (Lesson) refers to the latter.

the day scenes from the passion keep filling our mind, "Before the festival day of the Passover, Jesus knew that His hour had come; and since He loved His own, He proved His love to them in the fullest measure" (Ben. Ant.).

During the Magnificat, as the sun is setting, Christ rises before us solemnly and says, "I have power to lay down My life, and to resume it again."

1. Holy Mass (Nos autem). We march to the stational church of St. Prisca, a saint whose name in the Church's memory is associated with the apostles Peter and Paul. According to an ancient tradition the station marked the site where stood the house of Aquila and Priscilla, whose hospitality the two apostles enjoyed; it is, then, one of Rome's most ancient holy places.

Today we listen to the passion account according to St. Mark; he was St. Peter's companion; no other Gospel describes the denial of Peter in greater detail; regard it as the humble confession of the prince of the apostles. As we enter church, we are reminded of the sanctifying power of Christ's sufferings, His *beata passio*; the splendor of the resurrection, which will blaze forth at the week's end, already casts its beams into the present darkness. Note how all of the Introits this week are full of confidence and see through the crucifixion to the joy of resurrection.

The *Collect* seeks remission of sin through the *sacramenta Dominicae passionis*, the mysteries of our Lord's passion. In the *Lesson* the prophet Jeremias, the Old Testament prototype of the suffering Savior, tells us, "I was as a gentle lamb that is led to slaughter"; his enemies had resolved, "Let us put wood in his bread" (the liturgy uses the text in reference to the death on the Cross and the Eucharist). The three processional chants, viz., *Gradual, Offertory*, and *Communion*, are laments from Christ's lips; as we sing them we give ourselves as victims in union with Him and resolve to preserve in our hearts the memory of His death throughout the day.

Listen to today's Passion by St. Mark as if it were a sermon by St. Peter. While the Christian congregation files up to the altar to receive bread and wine transformed into Christ's body

and blood, the choir sings, "Drunkards at the gate make Me the butt of their songs." Drinking of the precious blood brings to mind the Gospel passage on the drunken soldiers who mocked Christ!

Note how the liturgy, especially during these days, loves to associate the bread and wine of the Offertory and Communion with the passion account (e.g., Sunday and Wednesday). The *Prayer over the People* is very thought-provoking; with reference to the removal of the old leaven before the Pasch, we beg God to purge away our sinful selves and to refashion us in holy newness.

2. **Peter and Christ's Passion.** Today is the appropriate time to consider Peter's part in the passion story. St. Mark's account should be particularly helpful. It is the Last Supper and Peter takes a leading part. When Jesus proceeds to wash His disciples' feet, Peter refuses to accept this menial service from his Lord. But when Jesus explains, he asks for a very thorough washing, hands and head included. It is a typical example of Peter's character—unreflecting, impetuous, hasty, yet devoted heart and soul to his Master. When Jesus reveals His knowledge of the betrayal, it is again Peter who at all costs must know the culprit's name. To John, reclining on the Savior's breast, he says: Ask Him whom He means! Probably Peter was thinking of some outsider.

On the way to Olivet, Jesus began to speak of His disciples' infidelity. Once more Peter rises as the self-appointed spokesman for the Eleven; certainly it was not to his credit to speak so disparagingly of the others, while boasting of his own loyalty. His words betrayed a proud self-confidence, "Even though all shall be scandalized because of You, I will surely not!" That was not the way for the head of the Church to speak. He must receive a rebuke he would never forget. Jesus replies, "This very night, before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." Of course, a violent disavowal.

Having arrived at Mt. Olivet, the Lord chose Peter and two others to accompany Him somewhat farther, for Peter should witness his Master's deep abandonment and deathly fear. The

admonition to watch and pray was not heeded; Peter fell asleep with the rest. Jesus awakened him and said softly, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch a single hour with Me?" Then only did Jesus speak to the others.

Soon the mob arrived to arrest Him. With sword in hand Peter alone begins defending His Master (Mark does not give his name—only John does). This deed shows Peter's love for Jesus, and also his rashness. As soon as Christ was seized, all the apostles fled, Peter with them. But Peter was restless; he wanted to know what was happening; he followed at a distance, yes, he even entered the lion's den, the yard before the courthouse.

While the great trial proceeded within, a lesser one took place before the doors. It would take too long to describe the incident of Peter's denial here. The passage in Mark, surely inspired by the apostle himself, should be read. But we must not overlook a telling detail in Luke, "Then the Lord turned around and looked at Peter . . . and he went out and wept bitterly."

Here Peter's passion begins, now to run parallel with Christ's. What a dreadful night Peter must have had! The next day he could not venture forth. One sad message followed another—the Master taken to Pilate, scourged, condemned to death. Through the streets of Jerusalem with a Cross. Crucified. And Peter cannot beg forgiveness, he must bear his ingratitude to the grave. That was Peter's passion. Others—John, Magdalen—were present at His death, he had become an outcast. Even the burial proceeded without him. Perhaps he came humbly to Jesus' Mother on the Sabbath, opened his sore heart to her, and found comfort and understanding. While Judas despaired, Peter, despite his remorse, remained loyal and full of confidence in the tender goodness of Jesus. The Master's words kept ringing in his ears, "After you have been converted, strengthen your brethren."

On Easter morning, Peter is no longer weak and hesitant. Upon hearing Mary Magdalen's report, he hurries to the empty sepulcher, and the fact of the resurrection begins to dawn upon

him. How wonderful that Jesus appeared first to Peter, the very person who had denied Him. Tears of repentance had long since washed away all guilt. Nor did the risen Lord reproach him, probably not a word was said about the denial; and Peter retained his former rank and position. That was our Savior's method. People are made grateful by silent forgiveness.

Only once is there an allusion to the denial, when Jesus asked Peter three times, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" Peter had learned much during the passion. No longer did he boast as on Thursday evening, "Even though all shall leave You, I will surely not!" Peter had learned humility. His deep fall, his triple denial, made him modest and cautious. He answered, "Lord, You know that I love You!"—Thus the denial became a lifelong lesson.

3. Active Participation in the Holy Week Services. Am I striving for active participation by all my people in the liturgy of Holy Week? Everyone in charge of souls should pause and reflect upon this question.

Much indeed would already be accomplished if everyone participated *passively*, that is, observed Holy Week in heart and mind without attending all the services in church. In any case, serious preparation weeks beforehand is required. Special study, for instance, is needed to pray the psalms, lessons, and prophecies with full understanding. Some few will find it possible to spend Holy Week in an abbey, where the services are celebrated according to full external ritual. But it is far better to participate personally, to have the members of the parish take active part in the services.

What opportunities are available? On Palm Sunday we gave a few hints: each layman receives a palm branch, he accompanies the King of martyrs into church, he pays homage in song and word and action, he shares in the reading of the Passion at least by lending an attentive ear. In short, on Palm Sunday he feels as a disciple who accompanies his Lord on the road to suffering and death.

During the week, at least from Holy Thursday on, it would be well to follow the Church in her official prayer, the Hours

of Divine Office. Vernacular, simplified forms of the Breviary are available, and an increasing number of lay people are showing themselves most responsive. Catholic Action circles, members of the Third Order of St. Francis and similar groups would welcome the opportunity to come to the parish church during the morning hours and pray Matins and Lauds together. The Lamentations sound very well in an English text; the lovely responsories could be said alternately. There are parishes in the United States where such is being done, and not only during Holy Week.

Of course, the greatest impetus for active participation has come from the simple change from morning to afternoon or evening for the principal service of the day. No longer do pastors need to lament over an empty, early morning Holy Week service. Our duty lies in keeping alive the enthusiasm that has been engendered, in educating the masses of the faithful to the meaning of the sacred acts, in drawing out the tremendous spiritual riches of grace and faith that may be gained so easily. Also, we must be willing to make the sacrifice of giving a second service where such is found necessary and may be had with the bishop's approval. It would be tragic if our churches, filled in many places "every hour on the hour each Sunday," remained less than crowded for the liturgy of the sacred triduum of Holy Week.

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Station at St. Mary Major

Judas, the traitor

Today the Church reads the Passion according to St. Luke, a practice that goes back at least to the time of Pope St. Leo I (died 461). The key antiphons tell about Peter. In the tradition of the Church Wednesday of Holy Week, every Wednesday in fact, brings to mind the treason of Judas.

In the morning we pray, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour with Me?" (an appropriate antiphon for Lauds!). In the evening, "The maid said to Peter: Surely you are one of them, your very speech gives you away" (Vespers).

1. Holy Mass (In nomine). Today's station, St. Mary Major, is one of Rome's largest churches; this and the fact that the Mass has three Lessons points to a liturgy that is very old. Was the choice of Lessons influenced by the station church? St. Luke, the evangelist of today's Passion, is said to have painted a picture of the Mother of God. Certainly none of the other evangelists has drawn a better word picture of Mary; it is sufficient to recall his beautiful infancy account. Isaias, the prophet of the Virgin birth, speaks twice in the Mass. We have, therefore, a triptych: the Mother of God in the center, Isaias and Luke on either side.

The Mass opens with a solemn, festive ring. Before the Lord obedient to death on a Cross, the Church triumphant, militant and suffering, lies prostrate in prayer. Nevertheless, the liturgy beholds the Redeemer already in glory at the Father's right hand. The same psalm (101) is used in four chants, another sign of the Mass's age. We have become acquainted with this psalm as a penitential psalm. (Let us pray the entire composition). In today's Mass its words are put upon the lips of the suffering Christ, to whom the congregation is united.

Note the great contrast between psalm and antiphon in the *Introit*; in the latter we see the Lord in the glory of the Father;

in the former He is on the Cross, humiliated and obedient unto death. At the *Communion* we build a spiritual bridge from psalm to chalice, "My drink is mingled with tears, because you have cast Me down from the heights. . . ." What suffering this chalice cost our blessed Lord!

The two *Lessons* by Isaias give us very beautiful prophecies on the Messiah's passion. The first Lesson sees Him as the divine Vintner: "Who is this that comes from Edom, in garments crimsoned by blood of Bosra? in resplendent garments, striding along in might and power? It is I (the Messiah)! I promise justice, I punish only to save. But why is Your clothing so bloody-red, Your garments like a vintner's? I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the nations no one is with Me. I trod down the nations in My wrath, stamped upon them in My fury. Their lifeblood spattered My garments and spotted all My clothing." By His suffering Christ pressed out the wine for the holy Eucharist.

The second Lesson describes the "Man of Sorrows" upon whom God laid the sins of mankind, "He was despised, the least of men, a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief. His face was veiled and spurned, so that we heeded Him not. Truly, He took our sorrow upon Himself. We considered Him a leper, a man smitten and humiliated by God. But He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins. For our salvation punishment fell upon Him; and by His bruises we are healed. Like sheep we wandered about, each one turning to his own way. The Lord laid on Him the inquity of us all. He was sacrificed because He Himself had willed it; He opened not His mouth. Like a sheep He is led to the slaughter; like a ewe before her shearer He remains silent and opens not His mouth."

The Passion, from the Gospel which stresses mercy and love, contains several very moving scenes, e.g., Christ forgiving the thief on the Cross. May the resemblance of Christ's passion and death which we are re-enacting in the present mystery remain in our thoughts and affections (*Secr.* and *Postc.*).

In the *Prayer over the People* we pray for the first time the beautiful prayer which will conclude the Hours of Divine Office during the holy Triduum: "Look upon this Your family, we beg You, Lord; for its members our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to give Himself into the hands of sinners and endure the torment of the Cross."

2. **The Office** is again filled with cries and lamentations from our suffering Savior. Recall that the Wednesday psalms, especially those of the Little Hours, are very heavy and sad, quite appropriate, therefore, to today's mood. For example, in Psalm 54 (at Terce) Christ laments over Judas' treacherous deed,

> "If an enemy had reviled Me,
> I could have borne it;
> If he who hates Me had vaunted himself against Me,
> I might have hidden from him.
> But you, My other self,
> My companion and My bosom friend!
> You, whose comradeship I enjoyed;
> at whose side I walked in procession
> in the house of God!"

In the lessons the prophet Jeremias again speaks to us: "All those who separate themselves from You are written in sand because they have abandoned the spring of living water, the Lord. Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed . . . for You are my praise . . . let them perish who persecute me. May terror seize them so that I may not be terrified. Bring upon them the day of reckoning; cast them down with double destruction."

"Give heed to me, Lord, and mark the words of my foes. Should evil be paid for good, in that they dig a pit for me? Remember that I have stood before You to speak good of them and turn Your wrath away from them." Listen to these words as if they came directly from Christ.

The responsories too are from the lips of our suffering Savior: "Deceitful men have surrounded Me, they scourge Me without reason. But You, Lord, are My advocate; protect Me. The need is very great, and there is no one to help."

The Sacred Triduum

The three last days of Holy Week are often called the Sacred Triduum (Triduum Sacrum). This period may be considered from a threefold viewpoint: a) first, these days bring to a climax and to a conclusion our preparation for Easter. The Church is, as we have often seen, an artist in the matter of graduated intensity. From Septuagesima on it has been a constant crescendo. Pre-Lent was the first step, then Lent. In Lent an irresistible onward drive was apparent. Then Passiontide, and a further step at Palm Sunday, which marked the beginning of Holy Week. Now we enter the Holy of Holies, the Sacred Triduum.

b) But these three days are already a part of Easter; for there is an inseparable union between the death and resurrection of Christ—the two together constitute the Easter mystery. Therefore we pass from Holy Week to Easter Week with no noticeable break; Holy Saturday is a resurrection and baptism service—the Easter vigil.

c) These three days may, nevertheless, be regarded as a unit in themselves, a true triduum or trilogy, a three-part drama on Christ's redemptive work. We have already interpreted the Hours of Matins and Lauds in this manner, and the same interpretation is valid for the evening liturgy. The Office emphasizes the Lord's "bitter suffering" and death; the remaining liturgy is generally of a different character and content. It deals rather with the *beata passio*, the glorious, victorious aspect of Christ's redeeming work (Matins are of later origin—from the eighth and ninth centuries whereas the Mass liturgy dates from the most primitive times).

The main themes of Matins on the coming days are: fear of death, the crucifixion, rest in the sepulcher; the three evening services, on the other hand, take as their principal subjects: the Eucharist, the triumph of the Cross, baptism and resurrection. Thus subjective-meditative piety and piety of an objective-receptive mold both find plenty food as the bitter passion and the glory of the Cross are alternately presented to the soul.

Here is a final observation on participation in the services during the Sacred Triduum. In the Middle Ages Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday were holydays; buying and selling stopped, and the people could take part in the religious celebrations without difficulty. This was as it should be. Christians ought to have the opportunity to observe these greatest of memorial days with due preparation and calm of soul, days on which the most sublime mysteries are re-enacted.

Unfortunately the economic situation is such that most of us can participate in these solemnities only after a regular day's work. In some places factories and stores close at noon on Good Friday. Zealous pastors will devise ways and means of utilizing this concession of the business world. In any case I would strongly urge all readers to remain as free as possible from work on these days. Attend and participate in all the services. The evening hour has made it easy.

The women should finish their usual Easter house-cleaning by Wednesday. In families interest in the Holy Week liturgy and zeal to attend the services should be stimulated. Pastors should arrange the services so that the greatest possible number of people can be present. It would indeed be tragic if the most solemn and sacred rites of the entire year would take place in empty churches now after the Holy See has again restored to the Christian world its most precious heritage.

HOLY THURSDAY

Station at St. John Lateran

Passion, Eucharist, Love

In Cena Domini, "At the Lord's Supper," is the name by which this day is known in the Roman liturgy. The title, accordingly, points out the principal event commemorated, the institution of the blessed Eucharist at the Last Supper. For centuries the German name has been "Green Thursday"; this term does not come from the color green, but probably from *greinen*, to weep—Weeping Thursday, because on this day in the ancient Church the penitents were received back into the community amid tears of penance and joy.

1. **Matins** of Holy Thursday form the first part of a trilogy, the introduction to the greatest spiritual drama of Holy Week. The basic theme is Christ's passion in its inward nature, its causes, and its effects. The following points may be distinguished in today's service: a) among the Jews Jesus' death had been by this time resolved upon; b) Judas betrays his Master; many passages refer to him or to his nefarious deed; c) the death agony on Olivet is the consummation of Jesus' interior suffering, i.e., in His soul and will; d) the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the sacramental continuation of the sacred passion.

The picture is drawn after a mosaic in Ravenna. The artist did not attempt to give a natural representation of the human figure, but rather to bring out ideas and ancient customs. Fish formed no part of the paschal meal; ancient pictures of the Last Supper, however, show a fish because of its symbolism (viz., Christ).

The action in today's Matins is focused on the historical events occurring on the evening of the first Holy Thursday. However, we must not expect an ordered chronological sequence as in real drama; the thoughts advance in sudden strides, then return again to a common point of origin. Scenes from the sacred passion, including some proper to the coming days, are presented out of chronological order; the whole is a prayer mosaic held together by the one major theme of the Redeemer's passion and death, with special emphasis on the events of Thursday evening.

The Psalms. Usually the psalms used for Matins on feasts and great occasions are specially chosen, i.e., from the treasury of the 150 psalms those are selected which in mood and content harmonize most easily with the mystery commemorated. This is not the case, however, today. The psalms follow in order from 68 to 76 (the old ferial Matins of Wednesday ended with 67; the series, therefore, was simply continued with 68 on Thursday), although not all of them are concerned with the topic of suffering. This may have been intentional, a weakness justified by the fact that today's Matins are a kind of introduction to the Holy Week triduum. Nevertheless, it makes the service somewhat less enjoyable, and the unpracticed worshipper will experience difficulty in relating the psalms to truths and events recounted in the Gospel.

We have already spoken about the Lamentations. In them we hear sinful mankind (our own souls too) lament over the desolation caused by sin, and the punishment sin occasions. Now we have the key to the first nocturn of Matins, these three days. In the prayer sections we see how our Redeemer is suffering; in the readings we strike our breast and say: He is doing this all for me!

The responsories, unsurpassably touching and beautiful in their simplicity, inject a dramatic element into Matins and preserve unity of action. You may notice, too, a very definite order and progression; in the first nocturn our thoughts are directed to the agony on Mt. Olivet, in the second to Judas, in the third to the sleeping disciples and the deicide planned

by the Jews. In all three Matins the last responsory treats the action farthest developed at the time.

On all three days Jeremias speaks in the first nocturn, St. Augustine in the second, and St. Paul in the third. Jeremias is the main Old Testament type of the suffering Redeemer, Augustine and Paul experienced personally and in a most powerful manner the effect of Jesus' suffering in the grace of conversion. A survey of Matins as a whole will show a marked unity of theme:

1. Most of the time is devoted to the death agony on Olivet, the topic to which Psalms 68, 69, 70, 76 can be related.

2. The Last Supper is referred to in the eighth lesson and in Psalm 71.

3. Noteworthy tableaus:
   a) Judas: responsories 4, 5, 6, 8.
   b) the sleeping disciples: responsory 8.
   c) the enemy: responsory 9.

4. The passion in general: Psalms 72, 73, 74, 75; lesson 6.

All nine responsories are exceptional for content and composition; Psalm 68 and lesson 8 are unusually beautiful in context; the Lamentations are magnificent.

2. Reconciliation of the Penitents. This impressive ceremony is still found in the Roman Pontifical. Although the rite no longer is in use, it can convey to us the spirit of true repentance and the joy of sincere penitents. The venerable rite proceeded as follows. The bishop knelt with his clergy—all in the violet vestments of penance—before the high altar and recited the seven penitential psalms and the Litany of the Saints.

In the meantime the penitents, barefoot and prostrate, waited outside the church door with unlighted candles in their hands. Soon after the litany began, the bishop sent two subdeacons with lighted candles to the penitents. Arriving at the threshold, they pointed to their burning candles, and, as a first heraldic greeting to the penitents, sang the antiphon: "As the Lord lives, I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." Immediately they extinguished their candles and returned to their places.

Soon the bishop dispatched two other subdeacons. As a second heraldic greeting at the threshold of the church, they sang: "The Lord says: Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand," and, having extinguished their candles, they likewise returned to the bishop.

But now the penitents have waited long enough! At the *Agnus Dei* of the Litany of the Saints, the bishop sends them one of the senior deacons, with a large, flaming candle. After he has greeted them with, "Lift up your heads—behold, your redemption is at hand," they light their candles from his. The deacon's candle is not extinguished, with it still burning he returns to the sanctuary. How beautifully the purpose of the Litany of the Saints was symbolized for the penitents by these three heraldic greetings!

When the Litany was finished, the bishop left the altar and in company with all the clergy proceeded to the middle of the nave. There he sat down, and the clergy formed two columns leading to the door of the church. Now, in full vestments, the archdeacon steps toward the penitents who are standing before the entrance and says, "Be quiet and listen carefully!" He turns from them to the bishop and addresses him in a lengthy, chanted discourse on the day of grace that has finally dawned.

"Most reverend Shepherd, the season rich in grace has now come; the day of divine favor and human salvation, the day on which death perished and eternal life began. In the vineyard of the Lord of hosts the new vine should be pruned in such a way that the old, defiled trunk will be purified."

After these words the bishop advanced through the double file of clergy and stood at the church door. There he delivered a short sermon to the assembled penitents. He reminded them of God's goodness and of the promise of pardon; he announced that they would soon be led back into the Church and told them how to amend their lives. Words gave way to song as he continued with fatherly affection: "Come, come, come, children, hear me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

The deacon who was nearest the penitents responded, "Let us kneel," which all the penitents did. After a few moments a deacon within the church calls out, "Arise," and the bishop repeats, "Come, come, come, children . . ." twice more, as the penitents kneel and rise at the bidding of the ministers. Slowly the bishop passes into the church through the main entrance

and sits down. "Go to Him and be enlightened, and your faces will not blush for shame," the antiphon for Psalm 33, is sung. Meanwhile the penitents follow the bishop and lie down on the floor in tears until the psalm is finished.

Thereupon the assistant priest, in the tone of a lesson, requests the bishop for formal reconciliation, "Restore in them, O apostolic Shepherd, what the devil's counsel destroyed. By the power of your prayers and merits bring these people by the grace of divine reconciliation close to God once more. They have been sufficiently unhappy in their transgressions; now they are pleasing to the Lord in the land of the living, and for this may they congratulate themselves, after the cause of their death is conquered." The bishop asks the assistant priest about the worthiness of the penitents, a question which is answered in the affirmative.

Now the solemn entrance into the church. The bishop takes one of the penitents by the hand, the next in line takes hold of him, with the result that all, under the bishop's leadership, are led to the middle of the church. What a unique procession! What an impressive liturgical scene! With one hand the bishop holds his pastoral staff and each penitent a burning candle, with the other they form an unbroken line; the bishop leads, wearing violet vestments of penance; the penitents follow, clothed in long gray garb. It is a very moving transition from the tears of penance to the joy of forgiveness.

Meanwhile the schola sings, "I say to you that the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who does penance." In the center of church the bishop turns to the penitents who kneel around him, and assumes the role of the happy father at the return of the prodigal son, "You must rejoice, my son, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost, and has been found!"

Now the actual reconciliation takes place in a prayer set to the preface melody. The bishop reminds the heavenly Father of Christ's redemptive death for the healing of all wounds, "so that we may rise again through His goodness." He begs pardon from the heavenly Father for the sins committed.

Again the procedure changes, the conclusion to the rite is legal in tone. The bishop kneels upon a carpet, clergy and people upon the floor. After the antiphon, "Create a pure heart in me, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,"

three psalms are sung (Ps. 50, the *Miserere*; Ps. 55, confidence in God; Ps. 56, the triumph of trust). Then the bishop rises and after reciting six long absolution prayers over the penitents pronounces the words of absolution: "May our Lord Jesus Christ, through me His servant, absolve you from all your sins and graciously lead you as free men into His heavenly kingdom!"

After pronouncing absolution, the bishop himself honors the penitents by bestowing upon them the sacramentals of holy water and incense; for this he uses the form, "Arise, you who sleep; arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." Finally he gives them an indulgence of his own choosing and solemnly imparts the pontifical blessing. The penitents are now completely restored to fellowship in the liturgical order of grace and life.

3. Consecration of the Holy Oils. Relatively few people are able to witness this portion of the Holy Week ceremonies because the consecration of the Holy Oils is reserved to cathedral churches.

Easter is the proper day for the renewal of any sacrament, but since the Holy Oils are needed for blessing the font on Holy Saturday, they are consecrated today by the bishop. As everyone knows, the Church uses three different Holy Oils: the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens, and Holy Chrism. The first is used in the administration of the sacrament of extreme unction and for the blessing of bells. The Oil of Catechumens is used at the blessing of the font and in the administration of baptism and holy orders. Holy Chrism, the most sacred of the three, is in a very special way the instrument of the Holy Spirit. It is used at baptism, confirmation, the consecration of bishops, and for the consecration of churches, chalices, patens and bells.

The consecration of the Holy Oils is a most solemn rite. According to ancient custom twelve priests, seven deacons, and seven subdeacons participate in it, i.e., all the clergy. The Oil of the Sick is consecrated first, at the end of the Canon before the Pater Noster; at this point in the Mass liturgy the unconsecrated gifts were blessed in olden times. After the Com-

munion the other two Oils are consecrated. Their efficacy is described in the consecratory prayers.

The Oil of the Catechumens should serve to "purify soul and body," by overcoming the influence of Satan's power. While this Oil is negative in its effect, Holy Chrism brings the positive graces of sanctification. Radically the word *chrism* is identical with the name Christ, since both are derivations from the Greek *kriein*, to anoint. The consecratory preface refers to it as the oil of "priests, kings, prophets, and martyrs." Through Holy Chrism, therefore, the faithful are given a priestly, a royal and a prophetic dignity, and they are clothed with the gratuitous vestment of sanctifying grace.

Although the actual text for the consecration of the Holy Oils remains practically the same as heretofore, a new Mass formulary has been provided by the 1955 Reform, consisting of texts culled primarily from the Gelasian sacramentary. Few compositions of modern times rival the beauty and excellence of this new chrism Mass. It has its own proper preface, "a prayer that God will establish the chrism as an instrument of perfect salvation and life for those who are to be made new in the spiritual bath of baptism, so that when this oil is poured upon them it will bring salvation and life, i.e., it will bring them the fullness of the Spirit, making them like to Christ, absorbing the corruption of fallen nature, and making each one of them a holy

The Master says: At your house I am keeping the Passover with My disciples.

temple redolent with the fragrance of an innocent life acceptable to God. May this anointing invest them with the dignity of kings, priests, and prophets, and clothe them with incorruption" (from *The Meaning of Holy Week* by Rev. William O'Shea).[1]

Every Catholic should make a real effort to be present at the blessing of the Sacred Oils in his cathedral church at least once during his lifetime.

4. Mass of the Last Supper. This morning at Matins the death agony on Olivet was given prominence but in tonight's liturgy the Last Supper occupies the central position. Let us, therefore, quickly recall its historical setting. In the forenoon Jesus sent His two favorite apostles, Peter and John, from Bethany to the city to prepare the paschal lamb and the table for the first Mass.

Late in the afternoon Jesus left Bethany, said farewell to His Mother, crossed Mt. Olivet and joined the apostles in the Upper Room. After sunset the events narrated in the Gospels occurred in the following order: 1. the paschal meal (paschal lamb), 2. washing of the feet, 3. unmasking of the traitor, 4. institution of the holy Eucharist, 5. Jesus' farewell discourse and His great sacerdotal prayer.

In ancient times three Masses were celebrated on this day: the first, in the morning, at which the penitents were reconciled; the second, later in the day, at which the Holy Oils were blessed; the third, in the evening, was dedicated wholly to the memory of Christ's Last Supper. This last Mass was brief and lacked a Fore-Mass (today's text is a later creation).

The Mass of Holy Thursday has a very special significance as the memorial of the Last Supper. There is something very touching and moving about this service. Tonight, if ever, we should take an active part in the great drama and not rest content as mere spectators. We should regard ourselves as disciples gathered about the Master in the Upper Room, a Master who serves us, speaks consolingly to us and feeds us with His own Body and Blood.

[1] The complete text for the chrism Mass and the consecration of the Holy Oils is given in the pamphlet entitled *The Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday* available from the Liturgical Press.

A double strain colors the Mass liturgy, one joyous, one heavy and sad. The joyous strain: the altar is adorned, the Cross on the high altar is veiled in white, the celebrant wears white vestments; the Gloria, so long absent, is solemnly sung and the bells ring for the last time. There are only a few days in the church year which touch the heart so deeply. After the Gloria no bell is sounded, a sign of mourning. For over this blessed celebration, devoted to the institution of the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, there likewise hangs a veil of deepest sorrow.

On this sacred evening only one Mass may be offered in a given church;[1] the priest of highest rank represents Christ, the rest are His apostles and receive Holy Communion from his hands. For the Mass is, after all, a repetition of the Last Supper. But it should also be a family and community celebration with pastor, assistants, and congregation gathered about the Lord's table—or rather Christ with His disciples! The station church is St. John Lateran, the Pope's own parish church. This implies, in the spirit of the liturgy, that all the members of the Church are gathered together around Christ for the Last Supper.

The proper of the Mass is borrowed from other Mass formulas, since in early times the Fore-Mass was lacking. In the *Introit* we repeat Paul's humble boast, "We must glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . ." The whole good fortune of being redeemed comes before us and we almost forget the bitter suffering in the light of Easter resurrection. This reference to resurrection in the *Introit* finds an echo in a very sobering *Collect* and in the *Gradual* ("Therefore God exalted Him"). The Mass, then, is very definitely oriented to Easter.

Succinctly the *Collect* relates the deeds of Judas and the good thief to the reward each received, and directs our petition accordingly. The good thief represents the penitents who today are received back into the kingdom of God. The *Offertory* continues this theme, "I shall not die, I shall live and proclaim the works of the Lord." References to Judas and his rejection

[1] Excepting, of course, those instances where permission is obtained to have one or two additional low Masses because of the great number of communicants.

are also found in various other places, e.g., in the *Epistle* (implied, at least, by the mention of unworthy communion); in the *Gospel* ("the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . ."); in the Canon (note the play on words, "that most sacred day on which our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, *traditus*—that day on which our Lord Jesus Christ gave, *tradidit*, to His disciples the sacrament of His Body and Blood").

The *Gospel* describes the washing of the feet at the Last Supper. In an act of divine humility Jesus showed how His commandment of love must be fulfilled by serving others. The two Lessons give the testament of our departing Master—His Body and His love. After the Gospel the 1955 Reform makes provision for the "Maundy Rite," or the washing of feet. This ceremony is not obligatory but may be carried out if local authorities deem it advisable. There is no evidence for this practice in classic liturgy. From the twelfth century onward it was practiced in certain monasteries; the recent Reform marks the first time it appears during Mass. While the feet of twelve persons are being washed, a beautiful hymn on the love of neighbor is chanted:

"Where there is love and fraternal unity,
God is present.
Let us rejoice and be glad in Him.
Let us fear the living God and love Him,
And with pure hearts be joined to one another. . . ."

Breathing the spirit of charity and peace, this song rises spontaneously from the hearts of God's children, a family now most intimately united by the bonds of divine love. Abstracting from the external ritual, the spirit underlying the act must not go lost.

A well phrased *Secret* petitions that He who instituted the Sacrifice of the New Law on this day and instructed His disciples to repeat it in His memory may make it acceptable to our almighty and eternal Father. The kiss of peace is lacking; medieval liturgists explain this anomaly in reference to the kiss of

Judas, but the real reason may be that it does not occur during the Sacred Triduum — it is lacking on Holy Saturday too.

Both proofs of our Lord's great love proper to this day, the Eucharist and the foot-washing, come to mind while singing the *Communion* verse. Note the profound implication: it is impossible to imitate Christ in His gift of the Eucharist, but we can imitate His example of humble service to others. Such service to others is the sign and expression of our union with Him, for which the Eucharist was established.

After Mass the ciborium with its Hosts for tomorrow's Communion service is taken to a side altar. Observing this, the modern day Catholic reflects: the Bridegroom is taken away, the church is deserted! Christians of former days thought differently, for a procession carrying the Eucharist remaining after Communion occurred with every Mass. Although the sacred Host is not reserved on the main altar, the church is never deserted; Christ remains present in the altar, and the house of God is the dwelling place of the most Blessed Trinity.

5. Uncovering the Altar. After Mass the altar is stripped, i.e., the altar cloths, the relics, and all other adornments are removed. In ancient times it was the usual custom to uncover the altar after each Mass, for the altar was regarded as a table set for the sacred banquet, even as tables are covered and set for meals in any home. This old custom has been retained during Holy Week; in general it is true that many old practices and customs of the Church are observed on these days, rites which later were interpreted as reminders of Christ's passion.

The altar is a symbol of Christ. From earliest times the stripping of the altar was associated with the crucifixion. The priest, therefore, prays Psalm 21 to the frame-verse, "They divide My garments among them, and for My vesture they cast lots" (in Psalm 21 David beheld the abandonment of Jesus suffering on the Cross). The church stripped of adornment now appears desolate and disconsolate; nor will the holy Sacrifice be offered again until the Lord has risen from the grave.

One could summarize the services of today in three phrases: the Body of Jesus, the suffering Jesus, the love of Jesus.

GOOD FRIDAY

Station at Holy Cross in Jerusalem

Through the wood of the Cross
joy has come into the whole world

Good Friday is Christendom's great day of mourning. In ancient times this day was aliturgical; as a sign of mourning no services at all were held. The modern liturgy is in part borrowed from the Eastern Church, e.g., the veneration of the Cross. There are four easily recognizable divisions: a) the Scripture Reading service; b) the Solemn Prayers; c) the veneration of the Cross (from the liturgy of Jerusalem, where it was observed already in the fourth century; originally this preceded the Readings, but was transferred to its present position in the late Middle Ages); d) the Communion Service.

The two key antiphons of the Office place us on Calvary: "They put above His head an inscription with the reason for the death sentence: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (Ben. Ant.). "When He had taken the vinegar, He said, 'It is consummated!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit" (Magn. Ant.).

1. **Matins of Good Friday.** This morning's Divine Office, a climax to the Hour Prayers of the Sacred Triduum, may be entitled: The Crucifixion. Although the action does not proceed chronologically, we can take as mid-point Jesus hanging on the Cross; and other scenes that arise may be interpreted as reflections or memories passing through the mind of the crucified Savior.

Grief-stricken is the word which best describes the spirit of the Hour. The most sad and sorrowful psalms of the psalter are recited; even the Lamentations seem more intense. Equally heavy and depressing, but still incomparably beautiful, the responsories do not reflect the historical sequence of events. Imagine your Lord on the Cross, hear the outbursts of a soul in agony—now indescribable abandonment, now a heart-rending cry of pain.

At this point let us sketch briefly the course of Matins and

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emphasize its finer texts. Without introductory delay the first nocturn begins with the battle of Jews and Gentiles against God on high and against His Anointed, *Christum eius* (Psalm 2). Then we see divine patience Itself on the Cross, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?," as we chant the Messiah's psalm of suffering (21). The verse, "They divide My garments among them, and for My vesture they cast lots," is used as antiphon. This song is one of the high points in today's Matins.

A psalm of calm confidence follows, one which opens to us the soul of Jesus in the midst of His death struggle, "The Lord is My light and My salvation; whom then shall I fear?" In the lessons we see the dishonored bride: "To whom shall I liken you, to whom shall I compare you, O daughter Jerusalem? . . . For great as the sea is your sorrow." Then the liturgy takes us again to Golgotha:

"The curtain of the temple was rent asunder,
The whole earth trembled. The robber on the cross cried:
'Lord, remember me when You enter Your kingdom!'
The rocks split, and graves opened,
And many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep arose."

In the third lesson it is Christ, the Man of Sorrows, who says: "I am the man who experienced misery beneath the rod of His anger. He oppressed Me, and brought Me to darkness and not to light."

In the second nocturn we pray the scourging psalm (37): "Nothing in My flesh is sound because of Your wrath, no healthy spot on Me because of My sins." Equally moving is Christ's "night prayer" on the Cross (Ps. 39). In the lessons

The picture. The various parts of the Good Friday liturgy are indicated by the saints in the crucifixion scene (p. 330). The Mother of God stands in an *Orante* position—the eight prayers of petition. St. John points to the divine King on the Cross—the Passion from the Fourth Gospel. Prostrate at the foot of the Cross Mary Magdalen kisses the feet of Christ—the veneration of the Cross. The Lamb stands for the Eucharistic Victim and reminds us of the second Lesson. Behind the Lamb the resurrection sun is rising ("on the third day He will enliven us"—first Lesson). Like the four rivers of paradise the waters of salvation flow from the base of the Cross. In them we may come to life, Christ's fortunate little fish. *Nos pisciculi Christi sumus.*

St. Augustine applies Psalm 63 to various events of Holy Week. The fifth responsory, the mid-point of Matins, describes how Jesus died.

Noteworthy in the third nocturn is the very sad Psalm 87: "My soul is surfeited with suffering, My life draws near the grave." An entirely new slant engages our attention with the lessons. Christ is our eternal Highpriest who on the altar of the Cross offered His unique and perfect sacrifice, acting simultaneously as Priest and Victim. The responsories follow the usual pattern and theme; the final scene—the *Pietà*: "My eyes have become dim through weeping, because He who comforted Me is far away. All you people, see whether any sorrow is like My sorrow."

2. The Evening Service. The station church for today's observance is the very ancient "Holy Cross in Jerusalem"; for us it takes the place of Mt. Calvary. In this basilica the great relic of the true Cross is preserved. We enter, the church is empty, bare of every adornment, the tabernacle is open and empty; a cross veiled in black stands on the altar—all this is an expression of silent, interior grief.

The service begins. No Introit—simply deep silence. No candles are lit on the altar (today, if ever, the Church speaks loudly the language of sign and symbol). Priests appear in black, and lie prostrate at the altar steps; this powerless prostration on the floor expresses the desolate state of man before redemption. The service that follows is composed of four well-defined units clearly indicated in the text.

a) The Readings. The Good Friday evening service begins with a very ancient Fore-Mass, an example of the ordinary Fore-Mass during the first four centuries. No Introit; the priests lie silently at the foot of the altar; three Lessons; between the Lessons whole psalms are sung as responsories; then the sermon, followed by a series of prayers embodying the needs of Christians.

The first part of the Good Friday liturgy has preserved this ancient order. We should pray these prayers with deepest awe, for we are using the very words early Christians used as they

prayed in the catacombs. The first Lesson, from the prophet Osee, was selected for the purpose of arousing contrition over sin. But we already can sense an Easter message, "He will give us new life after two days; on the third He will awaken us."

An interlude by the prophet Habacuc follows: "Lord, I have heard Your message and I am in fear; I have regarded Your works and am filled with fright. Between two creatures You will be found." Astonished and fearful the prophet beheld the dreadful drama on Golgotha, "the Lord" between two criminals, *in medio duorum animalium.*

The second Lesson tells about the Redeemer's meek prototype, the paschal lamb. Today this figure becomes reality as the true paschal Lamb, Christ, is slain! It was no accident that Jesus offered Himself in sacrifice at the very time of the Jewish Passover (Easter). At three o'clock, when the paschal lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, He expired on the Cross. The psalm following the Lesson is said with the betrayal of Judas and the suffering of Jesus in mind.

Now, having seen the Old Testament types, we meet their fulfillment in the Gospel account of the passion. Today Jesus' favorite apostle proclaims His suffering, John who stood beneath the Cross with the Mother of God. Whereas the other evangelists describe the passion accenting the human side, John shows us the suffering Savior as God and King. His portrayal of Christ's last acts is singularly powerful; on Calvary we almost see Jesus as "A King upon the Throne of the Cross!"

b) The Solemn Prayers. Three representatives of God have now spoken to us, the prophet, the law and the evangelist, and it is time to respond in prayer. The eight ancient orations for various classes of people are particularly appropriate for today, for Jesus, our King, is "exalted" and seeks to "draw all things to Himself." The second Adam, Christ, is sleeping the sleep of death, and from His side comes the second Eve, the Church. In the petitions we pray for the Church, the bride of Christ, for various groups within the Church, and even for schismatics and heretics.

Before the prayer itself priests and people kneel at the

deacon's bidding, *Flectamus genua* (Let us kneel down); then after some moments of silent prayer for the intention announced, they rise again when the deacon says, *Levate* (Arise). The various intentions are: Holy Church, the Pope as head of the Church, the various classes of clergy and laity, the catechumens, the afflictions of the world in general, heretics, Jews, and lastly the pagans. These prayers, said as early as the second century, are here preserved for us. While the Greek liturgy has retained the custom in every Mass, this particular usage became obsolete in the Roman Church at the time of Pope Gregory the Great.

c) The Veneration of the Cross. The drama of the Good Friday liturgy continues to unfold with the veneration of the holy Cross, the sign of man's redemption. This rite is likewise very ancient; it originated in Jerusalem, where the authentic wood of the Cross was honored and kissed. The priest takes off his cope, stands at the Epistle side and begins the solemn unveiling of the Cross. For this reason the crosses in the church have been veiled since Passion Sunday; now in solemn drama the Church unveils the Cross and focuses the attention of all Christendom on the awesome moment of *Jesus' Crucifixion.*

The priest holds the Cross and unveils the figure of the Crucified in three stages. At the same time, in three ascending keys, the following chant is sung: "Behold the wood of the Cross, upon which hung the salvation of the world!" The people kneeling in adoration, respond: "Come, let us adore!"

The Cross is then taken and held by two acolytes on the altar platform and a candle placed on each side. The priests and servers approach, with three genuflections, to kiss the sacred Wounds, thus honoring the Savior and the sign of our redemption. Then the faithful adore, approaching with a single genuflection. Our kiss is the sign of our contrition, our sympathy, and our love.

Christian, adore your Bridegroom covered with blood,
And in your kiss give Him your whole self!

During the veneration of the Cross the choir sings a number of heart-rending antiphons, the so-called *Improperia.* Jesus is

reproaching His faithless people; with the gentle force of tearful complaints He reminds them of the benefits He conferred during the old dispensation and chides them for their ingratitude. His accusations are pointed toward us and should be accepted as exhortations to true conversion. Again and again we hear: "My people, My people, what have I done against you, or in what have I offended you? Answer Me!" Hardly anything reaches the heart as easily and cuts as deeply as do these words!

Another chant, a much older one, praises Christ as God; it is sung in two languages, Greek and Latin: "*Agios O Theos*—Holy God, Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal One! Have mercy on us!" It is a sublime confession of God's greatness in the presence of the Cross, the triumphal sign of our redemption. The rite ends with a glorious, joyful song to the Cross and to the Lord's resurrection, "Your Cross, Lord, we adore! We praise and acclaim Your holy resurrection. Behold, through the wood of the Cross joy has come into the whole world."

d) Holy Communion. The final part of the Good Friday liturgy is a Eucharistic service. Since the earliest times the Sacrifice of Mass has been omitted on Good Friday, but Christians remained unwilling to forego the reception of holy Communion. Therefore at yesterday's Mass, sufficient Hosts were consecrated and reserved for use today. This Communion service without a concomitant sacrifice is a common occurrence in Lent among the Greeks. It is "a suitable conclusion to our Good Friday liturgy. Throughout the whole of it we have tried to enter as fully as possible into the saving passion and death of our Lord; first of all with our minds in our attentive listening to the account of His sufferings; then with our wills in exercising the universal charity taught us by Christ, in that we prayed for 'all sorts and conditions of men'; next, in our emotions, by our grateful adoration of His Cross; and finally by sacramental union with the very Victim of the Cross given to us in Communion. And by thus entering in fourfold manner, into His passion and death we find ourselves carried along towards the glory of His resurrection" (from *Preparing for Easter* by Fr. Howell, S.J.).

The service proceeds in solemn simplicity. As the ciborium containing the consecrated Hosts is brought back from the altar of repose, the choir sings three antiphons telling of the work of redemption on Calvary. Then the priest introduces the Lord's Prayer as at Mass but all present are to join him at the first invocation; it is our common "meal prayer" before the reception of the sacrament. Two further prayers of immediate preparation for holy Communion and the priest receives after the usual *Domine, non sum dignus*. Before the faithful receive there are the usual *Confiteor* and absolutions. Most appropriate would be the singing of select texts from the Good Friday liturgy as the people come forward to share most intimately and fully in the saving graces first won this day. The Passion Psalm (Ps. 21) is recommended in particular by the official directives.

Three prayers of thanksgiving bring the liturgy to a close. To each the faithful answer *Amen*, in token of unity of will and heart. For today's action is already an essential part of the Easter mystery, as we pray in the final petition:

> Remember Thy mercies, O Lord,
> and with never-failing protection
> sanctify Thy servants
> for whom Christ Thy Son
> inaugurated the Easter Mystery
> in His own Blood.

Let us briefly review the Good Friday liturgy. At Matins we reflected upon Christ in His human humiliation, "a worm, the scorn of men." All the parts of the evening service presented Him as our Redeemer, yes, as our King upon the throne of the Cross: first, in the Passion of St. John and in the eight orations; then in the unveiling and adoration of the Cross; and finally as the slain and yet transfigured Lamb of God in the Communion service. Note the gradation: the Redeemer's death on the Cross is depicted first by words (prophet, Law, Gospel), by action and symbol, and lastly by the Sacrament.

HOLY SATURDAY

Station at St. John Lateran

Holy Saturday (from *Sabbatum Sanctum*, its official liturgical name) is sacred as the day of the Lord's rest; it has been called the "Second Sabbath" after creation. The day is and should be the most calm and quiet day of the entire Church year, a day broken by no liturgical function.

Our hearts overflow with joy because this ideal way of keeping Holy Saturday has again become possible for us; for by a decree on February 8, 1951, Pope Pius XII restored the ancient Easter Vigil service and ordained anew the rites for its celebration. He made Holy Saturday become the great day of quiet rest and holy silence in the Church year.

And it is a restoration that in part is due to our efforts. For in its various editions *Das Jahr des Heiles* during more than a quarter century had stood at the door of the Father of Christendom like the importunate friend in the Gospel story until an answer was finally given. Even the last edition still expressed our wish: "It is one of the great objectives of the liturgical movement to restore to the Catholic world the Easter Vigil service, the 'mother of all vigils,' as St. Augustine called it. The unliturgical spirit and mentality of the last centuries has deprived us of the holiest of all nights; the liturgical spirit of our day will correct this error." With the present edition of *The Church's Year of Grace*

we are privileged to present and meditate upon the liturgy of Holy Saturday as contained in the newly restored Easter Vigil rite.

1. Matins of Holy Saturday — the Final Act of the Great Trilogy.

Before we come to the Easter Vigil service in the strict sense, it would be well to note again the modifications in the Divine Office as they affect Holy Saturday. The first notable change is that Tenebrae, which for centuries took place on Good Friday night and was celebrated with traditional solemnity, according to the new rite is not to be anticipated; Matins and Lauds for Holy Saturday are to be "said" Saturday morning. The Hours of Divine Office are the day's only liturgical function; they should be distributed according to their corresponding hours — *hora competenti* — and be recited without special solemnity in order that the day's peaceful quiet be preserved. Matins, then, and Lauds will be said at the opportune times Saturday morning.

The Setting. Christ lies in the grave, the Church sits near and mourns. After the great battle He is resting in peace, but upon Him we see the scars of intensest suffering. While the responsories yesterday were mostly from the lips of Jesus, today they are, in large part, laments by the Church.

The Lamentations are imbued with the breath of hope, in fact, everything is more calm and settled. Toward the end of Matins, however, the usual dark clouds of sadness and grief return, which is not surprising; for Matins should depict the mourning of the Church over the loss of her divine Bridegroom. The mortal wounds on His Body remain visible; they cry out continually for punishment upon faithless Israel. Jesus' enemies are still furious, attempting to obliterate the very memory of the Lord by lies and slander.

Mary and the disciples are grief-stricken, while the Church must mournfully admit that too many of her children return home from Calvary cold and hard of heart. When Mother Church reflects upon all of this, it seems as if the wounds of her dearly Beloved were again beginning to bleed.

Matins of Holy Saturday, unlike Matins of Holy Thursday and Good Friday, are not static, there is progressive movement, particularly in the antiphons and psalms. The responsories, however, are the exception. I like to see six scenes in today's drama, six tableaus passing through the mind of Mother Church as she sits in the shadow of the sepulcher keeping prayerful watch.

First tableau. Jesus rests in the sepulcher (1 nocturn): "I sleep and rest in peace." "He will rest upon the holy mountain." "My Body will rest in hope" (the Psalms).

Second tableau. Jesus' soul enters limbo (2 nocturn): "Be lifted up, eternal gates, and the King of Glory will enter" (Ps. 23).

Third tableau. Hope of resurrection: "I believe that I shall see the Lord in the land of the living." "You brought Me up from the nether world" (Pss. 26; 29).

Fourth tableau. Sealing of the grave: the lessons of the second nocturn.

Fifth tableau. Jesus, the Conqueror of His enemies: 3 nocturn, Psalms 53; 75.

Sixth tableau. Return to the usual mood of deep mourning and weeping: "I have become like a man without help, destined for the grave" (Ps. 87); also responsories 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; the last responsory gives the final stage of the action on Holy Saturday, viz., Jesus in the grave, with soldiers standing guard.

Note how important the frame-verses of Matins are, and how individual psalms were chosen not because of content but for single verses, e.g., Psalms 4, 14, 23.

Without digression the action proceeds to the very threshold of Easter morn. But when one would most expect the joyous Alleluia, the mood changes suddenly and a cloud of mourning lowers again. It is as if a voice shouted: Stop, re-trace your steps, the Bridegroom is still lying in the tomb!

A peculiar charm envelops the hour of Matins. It can be perceived only after you have lovingly tried to lose yourself in

its mystery. Perhaps the charm lies partly in the mixture of mourning, hope, and repressed joy.

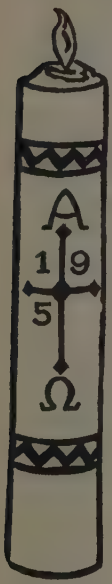
At Lauds we meet the first modification in the text. After the antiphon, "Christ became obedient . . . ," Psalm 50 is not said as on the two previous days; instead a new Collect follows immediately: "Grant, we beseech Thee Almighty God, that we who await the resurrection of Thy Son with reverent expectation may share in the glory of His resurrection." Following the pattern set by Lauds, this Prayer (without Psalm 50) brings to a close all today's Hours.

Vespers, prayed in the afternoon, are like those of Holy Thursday apart from a changed first antiphon ("Today I am afflicted exceedingly, but tomorrow I shall break My bonds") and a new Magnificat antiphon: "The chief priests and pharisees made the sepulchre secure, sealing the stone, and setting guard." Formerly Vespers formed part of the Communion at the morning Mass, now they are said toward evening. Compline follows a similar pattern. Thus the whole day proceeds quietly, peacefully, broken only by the respective Hours of the Divine Office.

2. The Easter Vigil Service. It is during the night between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday that the Easter Vigil is celebrated. The service begins around ten o'clock, in order that the solemn vigil Mass may start at midnight. The altar, stripped of all adornment since Holy Thursday, is now covered with linens, but candles and lamps are lit only after the blessing of the fire. Outside, at the church's entrance, fire is struck from flint. The priest, clothed in violet vestments, blesses the new fire: "O God, through Thy Son, the true Cornerstone, Thou hast enkindled in the faithful the fire of Thine own brightness. Hallow † now for our use and profit this new fire struck from stone, and grant us through this Easter feast to be so inflamed with desire for heaven that we may attain with pure souls to the feast of everlasting brightness."

After the fire has been sprinkled three times with holy water, an acolyte places portions of the coals in the censer. The priest adds incense and censes the fire. A candle is lit from the blessed fire. Now the ministers proceed to the church's entrance; an

acolyte brings the paschal Candle to the priest who blesses it with solemn ceremony. Upon it he inscribes a number of symbols to show that the Easter Candle is a sign of the risen Savior. With a stylus he begins by cutting the sign of the Cross; making the vertical line he says: CHRIST YESTERDAY AND TODAY, and at the horizontal line: THE BEGINNING AND THE END. Above and below the Cross he inscribes the Greek letters *Alpha* and *Omega*. At its four cross angles he puts the numerals for the current year, saying: HIS ARE THE SEASONS — HIS THE AGES — TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION — THROUGH AGES ETERNAL. AMEN. From the deacon the celebrant then receives five grains of incense; he sprinkles them with holy water and honors them with incense. That these grains signify the glorified wounds of the risen Savior is clear from the words the priest says while inserting them into the Candle:



BY HIS WOUNDS, HOLY
AND GLORIOUS
MAY HE PROTECT US
AND PRESERVE US
WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD. AMEN.

The deacon then hands the priest the blessed fire and he lights the Easter Candle with the words: CHRIST RISES RESPLENDENT, MAY HIS LIGHT DISPEL FROM HEART AND MIND THE EVIL NIGHT!

Then the priest prays the following prayer over the Candle: "We beseech Thee, Almighty God, pour forth Thy abundant † blessing upon this burning Candle. Thou, the Unseen, who renewest all things, intensify the splendor of this night. May the Candle we offer tonight shine more brightly through the secret addition of Thine own radiance. And wherever a portion of this hallowing mystery of fire shall be carried, may the evil of Satan's guile be driven thence, and the power of Thy majestic glory made manifest."

Thereupon all the lights of the church are extinguished in order that they may be relit from the blessed Easter Candle. A solemn procession with the paschal Candle now forms — one of the more impressive ceremonies of the entire Vigil service. In the church's vestibule the deacon, Easter's herald vested in white, takes the burning Candle. The procession begins — incense bearers, subdeacon with Cross and two candle bearers, deacon with the Easter Candle, the priest, assisting clergy, acolytes, representatives of the parish. At three points the deacon halts, lifts on high the Easter Candle, and sings: *Lumen Christi* — Behold, the Light of Christ. At the first stop the priest lights his candle from the Easter Candle; at the second the assisting clergy, at the third all the people. Each time all genuflect for the response: *Deo gratias*. The assembled faithful have their candles lit from the paschal Candle, and lastly the lamps in the church. The whole edifice is ablaze with hundreds of fiery tongues!

The Easter Candle is placed before the altar upon a temporary lampstand. At their respective places all stand in reverence (as at the Gospel), with burning candle in hand to listen to the *Exsultet*, Easter's solemn hymn of praise, the first joyous acclaim to the risen Lord. The priest responds to the deacon's request for a blessing: "The Lord be in your heart and on your lips that you may worthily and properly proclaim His praise with this Easter Song." The deacon censes the Book and Candle, walking fully around the latter. Then he proceeds to chant the *Exsultet*, a hymn that never ceases to touch the heart and mind. Towards the end of this canticle there is a small change in the text; formerly the Roman emperor was mentioned and petition made in his behalf; now the petition is placed in behalf of all rulers: "Look with favor, too, upon our rulers. Assist them with Thy boundless love and gracious mercy; direct their hearts toward justice and peace, that after this life of earthly labors they may attain, together with all Thy people, to the heavenly fatherland."

After the *Exsultet* the deacon puts off his white vestments, the candles held by the faithful are extinguished, all are seated, and the ancient Vigil service begins in the presence of the burning paschal Candle. Before the recent restoration there were twelve

prophecies; now these have been reduced to four. Retained are the first, and the three that were followed by a tract, viz., 1st Reading: Gen. 1:1 — 2:2 (the six days of creation); 2nd Reading: Ex. 14:24 — 15:1 (the passage through the Red Sea followed by the Canticle of Moses); 3rd Reading: Is. 4:2–6 (the glory of the Messianic kingdom, followed by the hymn of the "Beloved's Vineyard"); 4th Reading: Deut. 31:22-30 (Moses' last exhortation to fidelity, followed by the Song of Moses).

At the close of each Reading all stand. The priest bids the assembled faithful: Let us pray. The deacon adds: Let us kneel down! — an exhortation to silent prayer. After a brief interval, the subdeacon directs: Arise! Only now does the priest read the given Collect. Here we have an instance of the restoration of an ancient form of prayer. This is what remains of the Readings. Some perhaps will recall regretfully the twelve prophecies of the former rite — with certain preferences that ought to have been retained. Nevertheless, everyone will admit that the twelve prophecies were much, much too long for parish liturgy.

After the Readings follows the Blessing of Baptismal Water. According to the new rite this occurs about midway through the Litany of the Saints. First we invoke the saints, then we bless the water that makes us such. This now takes place not at the font but in the sanctuary before the eyes of the assembled faithful. The blessing is followed by a new rite, the renewal of baptismal vows on the part of all present. A practice that certain pastors of souls had added after the blessing of the font on their own initiative has now become an official ceremony — and *in the vernacular!* The priest censes the Easter Candle, proceeds to the pulpit and says:

Priest: In this most sacred night, my dear brethren, holy Mother Church commemorates the death and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ. In return for His great love she lovingly keeps watch with Him. And looking forward to His glorious resurrection, she rejoices with an exceeding joy.

But, as the Apostle teaches us, we have by baptism been buried with Christ into death. As Christ, then, has risen from the dead, so we too must walk now in newness of life. For we know that

our old self has been crucified with Christ, that we may no longer be slaves to sin. Let us remember always that we have died to sin, but are to live for God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, beloved brethren, having completed the Lenten observance, let us now proceed to renew the promises of our holy baptism. By these promises we once renounced Satan and all his works, as well as that world which is the enemy of God; we vowed, furthermore, to serve God faithfully in the holy Catholic Church.

And therefore I ask you once again:

Priest: Do you renounce Satan?

All: We do renounce him.

Priest: And all his works?

All: We do renounce them.

Priest: And all his allurements?

All: We do renounce them.

Priest: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Priest: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born into this world and who suffered for us?

All: We do believe.

Priest: And do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: We do believe.

Priest: Let us now together pray to God, as our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us:

All: Our Father, *etc.*

Priest: And may Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who caused us to be born anew by water and the Holy Ghost, and who granted us remission of sins, keep us by His grace unto everlasting life in the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

During the renewal of baptismal vows the faithful hold burning candles; at its close they may be sprinkled with baptismal water. What a still deeper impression this ceremony would make if, moreover, a number of adults were actually baptized and made their first holy Communion!

Thereafter follows the second part of the Litany of the Saints. The ministers meanwhile vest in white for the solemn celebration of the Vigil Mass. The Easter Candle is placed in an appropriate place to burn for forty days as the symbol of the risen Savior. The changes in the vigil Mass are few, but of singular importance. The prayers at the foot of the altar and the Last Gospel — additions dating to the late Middle Ages and which in no way are essential — are omitted. (May we here see a sign that further late accretions will be gradually eliminated?) At the Communion a shortened form of Lauds is said. Lauds, the Church's official morning prayer, always commemorates Christ's resurrection. Very appropriately it now forms the final act in the Easter Vigil Service, our solemn, grateful praise to God who this night "visited and wrought redemption for His people." Such the ordo for the restored Easter Vigil service, one over which every friend of the liturgy may indeed rejoice.

2. Historical Background. The Easter Vigil service is comprised of the following four major steps: 1. the blessing of the fire and the paschal Candle, 2. the prophecies, 3. the blessing of the font, 4. the Easter Mass. The blessing of the fire was not Roman in origin; yet the *Lucernarium*, i.e., the blessing of light before Vespers, was a very ancient Christian practice from which not only the blessing of the Easter Candle but also the "Lumen Christi" ritual developed (the latter by way of Spain and Gaul). The blessing of the fire, a rite of Celto-Germanic origin, did not reach Rome until the Middle Ages. In summary we may say that these three "light rites" have their roots in the ancient Christian *Lucernarium* blessing.

Our present readings or prophecies are of ancient Roman liturgical stock. During the first centuries vigils (Matins) consisted of Scripture readings, prayers, and responsories. Our present form of Matins, in which the chanting of psalms predominates, came into existence later (5th century) under the influence

of monasticism. The reading service, as held before today's Mass, is the original form of the Sunday vigil at Rome.

The rite for the blessing of baptismal water is likewise very old. In ancient times baptism was ordinarily conferred on adults, and by immersion in the baptistery. The people did not enter the baptistery; it was too small, and Christian modesty might have been offended. During the administration of the sacrament the people waited in the church and occupied themselves by singing the Litany.

The Mass which followed has remained almost unchanged; therefore it has neither Introit nor Offertory nor Agnus Dei nor Communion chant, all of which were added later. These brief, historical comments (taken mostly from Schuster, *Liber Sacramentorum*) should satisfy for historical orientation.

3. The Mass of Easter Eve. After the Litany, which likewise forms the transition to the Mass, the ministers appear in white vestments. The formulary used is the original Easter vigil Mass; like the first Mass on Christmas day it should be celebrated at midnight. The full noonday glory of the feast will not burst forth until tomorrow's High Mass. Tonight's Mass is, in a real sense, a "baptismal Mass." It was the first Mass, the first Sacrifice offered by the newly baptized; now for the first time they were invited to eat at the table of the Lamb. For us too it should be a baptism Mass, an occasion to renew our baptismal vows.

The picture was inspired by a portion of the apse mosaic in the Lateran. From the Cross of the glorified Christ flow the rivers of supernatural life (the four rivers in the new paradise of God). Its waters give life (baptism) through the operation of the Holy Spirit who hovers above all.

The Mass has certain peculiarities. Introit, Kyrie, Offertory verse, Agnus Dei and Last Gospel are lacking because it dates to the time when these chants had not yet been introduced. The Litany of the Saints, which formerly preceded every station Mass, serves as the *Introit* and its conclusion as the *Kyrie*. At the intonation of the *Gloria in excelsis* all the bells are rung to herald the joy of Easter to the entire world. The *Gloria* today is an Easter song, it was that exclusively in ancient times.

The *Collect* presupposes a night context, it petitions that the newly baptized may fulfill their Christian duties perfectly. The *Epistle* adds high motivation, "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above!" Now another thrilling moment: the *Alleluia*, Easter's hymn *par excellence*, is thrice repeated. Since Pre-Lent the Alleluia has not been heard, now it will resound time and time again as the year moves through its course. (Before the time of Gregory the Great, Alleluia was sung only at Easter.)

The *Gospel* brings the good message of the first Easter. St. Matthew's account was given preference because of the opening phrase, "Late in the night of the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn." We are celebrating this Mass "late in the night of the Sabbath"—between Saturday and Sunday, just before dawn; at this early hour we come with Mary Magdalen to see the grave, and hear the angel's message. A *Secret* of ancient composition would have our Easter offertory gifts effect eternal healing within us.

The changes at the *Communion* of the Mass have already been noted. As the fruit of our Easter Communion the *Postcommunion* singles out the spirit of divine love. The *Ite missa* est is embellished by a double, solemn Alleluia and we leave the house of God filled with the joy and grace and happiness of Easter. For in us, as once in the souls of the newly baptized, Christ has come to life.

Meanwhile the night has waned, and dawn is breaking—the sacred moment of our Savior's resurrection.

4. The Twelve Prophecies. Although the twelve prophecies have now been reduced to four, we need not consign their spirit-

ual values to oblivion. In this series of readings, responses, and prayers, we have an excellent example of the ancient vigil service, or Hour of Matins. Originally most of the time was devoted to reading; three nocturns are implied in that the lessons constitute three groups, four to each.

In four accounts taken from the Books of Moses, the first nocturn (prophecies 1-4) tells of the kingdom of God by way of types. These were the favorite types of the ancient Church, pictured very frequently in the catacombs. 1st prophecy. Creation of the visible world as a figure of the new creation (redemption, and the grace of baptism). In former times the lesson probably continued to include the fall. 2nd prophecy. The ark as a figure of the Church, and Noe as a type of Christ (through whom the world was renewed). 3rd prophecy. The sacrifice of Isaac typified the sacrifice of the Cross. Abraham is the father of all believers. 4th prophecy. The passage through the Red Sea was a common figure for baptism.

These four lessons depict the kingdom of Christ in its essential features. The great patriarchs, Adam, Noe, Abraham, and Moses, were God's agents of revelation and divinely constituted prototypes of Christ. We made their acquaintance on the three Sundays of Pre-Lent and during the fourth week of Lent. Remember too that the prayer after each lesson is often helpful for the proper orientation. Thus the first group is cast in one mold; it closes with the canticle of Moses, a thanksgiving prayer from the lips of Mother Church for God's great work of redemption.

In the second nocturn (prophecies 5-8) the prophets address us (Moses *and* the prophets bear witness to Christ). This second group is somewhat more heterogeneous in nature. Perhaps the fourth oration gives the key, viz., all Israel's privileges and special gifts have become the Church's in a higher sense. 5th prophecy. Isaias describes blessings proper to the kingdom of God, e.g., the water of baptism, the wine and milk of the Eucharist; Christ as our guide; God's merciful forgiveness of sin. 6th prophecy. True wisdom abides in the Church of Christ. The catechumens have already tasted the salt of wisdom; soon they will embrace Wisdom Incarnate (Christ). 7th prophecy. The prophet Ezechiel beholds a field of dry bones which come

to life by the breath of God—a marvelous figure of Christ enlivening souls in baptism and awakening sinners from the dead, He Himself leaving the tomb as the first-born of the risen. 8th prophecy. When Israel has suffered sufficiently, there will come a time of unprecedented happiness, the era of the Messiah. We are God's new planting; every Christian is a saint, and his name inscribed in the book of the heavenly Jerusalem. The pillar of fire and the cloud of light remind us of Christ's real presence in the Church. The tract at the end of the second group summarizes the preceding four lessons: *The new Israel, God's true vineyard, is the Church.*

The third nocturn (prophecies 9-12) shows preference for historical vignettes. 9th prophecy. The paschal lamb prefigured both the death of Christ and its memorial, the blessed Eucharist; when this passage was read yesterday, the emphasis was on the former, today the latter is stressed. 10th prophecy. In Jonas we see a type of Christ, while the Ninivites, ready for penance, represent the catechumens. 11th prophecy. Moses' farewell address is a sober admonition from Mother Church to persevere faithfully. It is followed by verses from the Song of Moses in praise of God's fidelity; with joy catechumens and faithful accept the admonition.

The twelfth prophecy brings the vigil service to a close. The story of the three young men in the fiery furnace was a favorite in the ancient Church, it was read at the conclusion to every night-watch and served as a transition to the Eucharist service at dawn. For these three men were figures of resurrection, and thus a powerful incentive to martyrdom.

This brief survey should show that the twelve prophecies deserve our sympathy and study. During Lent or Paschaltide they could be read and discussed at liturgical meetings.

The first Alleluia. Rare is the person who is not profoundly moved by this magnificent melody (assuming that it is sung correctly and according to authentic notation). Hesitantly and shyly, as it were, the song begins, rising on a minor third; then as a bird with beating wings it trembles upon its resting note, until with sudden confidence it soars high to *do* in full triumph.

This thrice-repeated jubilant chant may well be regarded as the first cry of the Holy Spirit, the divine Dove, from the heart of God's newborn children, the first breath of the Blessed Trinity now living within them. How beautiful, as the song of the celebrant is re-echoed by the choir! As their first word Holy Church is teaching her children to sing the acclamation which will resound forever in the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem. And we too, though long baptized, sing it as a *Canticum Novum* (a new song) from the lips of our Mother.

3. The Exsultet. No liturgical text speaks as eloquently and enthusiastically in praise of Easter as the *Praeconium Paschale* or *Exsultet.* Beneath the inspired words of this ancient Christian composition lies a spiritual world which makes us feel intuitively the nobility of Christianity. Words are bodies that have a soul; this soul must be known if the words are to be fully understood. What does the *Exsultet* tell us about the Easter mystery? It approaches the subject on three levels, that of Old Testament type, that of historical fact, and that of sacramental re-presentation here and now of the mystery of Redemption. The three levels coalesce in grand unity, minus the differentiation of time perspective.

a) The paschal mystery in Old Testament types. Tonight is the night in which Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, tonight is the night in which the paschal lamb was slain and the doorposts marked with its blood. This night Moses marched at the head of his people dry-shod through the Red Sea, with the pillar of fire that banished darkness leading the way. This was the night when Egypt was despoiled and Israel enriched!

There is no hesitation in explaining the new by ancient figures, "For this is that Easter feast in which the true Lamb is slain, whose blood sanctifies the doorposts of the faithful." It

is the night when in baptism we pass through the Red Sea, preceded by Christ, the new pillar of fire, in the Easter Candle. Thus a proper understanding of ancient types tells us much about tonight's mystery.

b) Easter Eve from the historical viewpoint brings to mind the death and resurrection of Christ. Emotion runs high as the *Exsultet* touches upon this event. We can almost feel the soul of the Church, trembling and tense, at the words:

"We praise Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who paid to the eternal Father in our stead the debt of Adam, and with His own blood shed for love of us erased the ledger of ancient guilt."

"This is the night in which Christ burst the bonds of death and came forth as Conqueror from the grave."

"O truly blessed night, which alone merited to know the time and hour when Christ arose from the dead!"

The implications of this reality are simply tremendous. In strong, direct language some of these truths are put before as the hymn continues: "Unless we had been redeemed, it would avail us nothing to be born. O wondrous condescension of Your mercy toward us! O incomprehensible goodness of love: to redeem a servant You delivered up a Son!"

Seldom do we find statements as bold and breathtakingly beautiful as: "O truly necessary sin of Adam, which the death of Christ has blotted out! O happy guilt, that merited a Redeemer so holy and so great!"

Thus on this second level we review the greatest event of history, Christ's work of man's redemption.

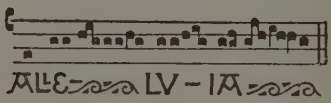
c) And now the third approach to the Easter mystery, its present day realization in which we are allowed to share. Much has already been gathered from the previous two levels. But the *Exsultet* seeks to describe in express terms the significance of the present moment.

The first point to note is that the hymn speaks of Easter night as a *sacrament*. This is an extremely important observation for we have become so accustomed to evaluate feasts in terms of emotion or spiritual edification that is moral in nature.

We assume that we have celebrated Easter worthily if we have been thrilled spiritually and have made a few good resolutions. Emotional impacts may, indeed, be experienced and good resolutions should be made, but these must not be regarded as first in importance. Some persons seldom are subject to profound emotion, while many complain of aridity, particularly on solemn feasts. The essential effect of the Easter mystery cannot be sensed, for it is *sacramental* in nature. Something happens deep within the spiritual recesses of our souls: Christ enters to bring His saving grace. Of this we must be utterly convinced.

The *Exsultet* stresses this point, and we must take its words literally, "This is the very night which delivers all who believe in Christ from worldly vice and from the darkness of sin, which restores them to grace and makes them co-sharers with saints." "The holiness of this night drives out wickedness and washes away guilt; it restores innocence to the fallen and joy to the sorrowful. It banishes enmities, establishes peace, and brings low the pride of tyrants." "O night when heaven is wedded to earth, and God to man."

Spiritual elevation to union with God through the power of Christ is what this holy night accomplishes, even though we experience the very opposite in and around ourselves. Of course people will continue to sin, even after Easter; and the most perfect of Christians will remain weak. Despite all that, we must believe firmly that now, at Easter, God enters the world and our souls, to consecrate and sanctify. This is the most profound message the liturgy of holy Easter has to tell us. Deepen your faith in the sacramental character of the solemnity.



The Proper of the Saints

The Proper of The Saints

The feasts of saints occurring previous to February 6 are given in Volume I. Since the saints should recede into the background during the Lenten season, the biographical sketches will be shorter than heretofore, and the meditation will usually be omitted.

February 6

ST. TITUS, Bishop

ST. DOROTHY, Virgin and Martyr

That we may live temperately and justly and piously in this world

1. **St. Titus.** *Day of death*: January 4, about the year 100 A.D. (according to the Roman Martyrology). *Grave*: in his episcopal city, Gortyna, Crete. His head is honored in Venice. *Life.* St. Titus, a pagan by birth, became one of St. Paul's most illustrious disciples. He accompanied the apostle on several of his missionary journeys and was entrusted with important missions. Finally he came with St. Paul to the island of Crete, where he was appointed bishop. He performed this duty in accordance with the admonition given him, ". . . in all things show yourself an example of good works" (Tit. 2:7).

Tradition tells us that he died a natural death at the age of 94, having lived in the state of virginity during his whole life. St. Paul left a worthy monument to Titus, his faithful disciple, in the beautiful pastoral letter which forms part of the New Testament. Today's feast in his honor was introduced in 1854.

2. **St. Dorothy,** (i.e., the gift of God), a virgin from Caesarea in Cappadocia, allegedly suffered a martyr's death under Diocletian. Her relics are honored in a church dedicated to her honor in the Trastevere section of Rome. (On the door of St. Dorothy's Church the names of those who had not received holy Communion during Easter time used to be posted.) Her

feast was introduced into the Roman calendar during the Middle Ages.

A very edifying story is related in connection with her name. As Dorothy was being led to execution because of her faith in Christ, she prayed, "I thank You, O Lover of souls, for having called me to Your paradise." A certain Theophilus, an official of the Roman governor, jestingly retorted, "Farewell, bride of Christ, send me apples or roses from your Bridegroom's garden of bliss." Dorothy answered, "I most certainly will."

While devoting herself to prayer during the few moments permitted before receiving the death stroke, she beheld a vision of a beautiful youth who carried three apples and three roses in a napkin. She said to him, "I implore you to take these to Theophilus." Soon the sword severed her neck, and her soul returned to God.

As Theophilus was mockingly telling his friend of Dorothy's promise, a young man stood before him holding a linen in which were wrapped three beautiful apples and three magnificent roses. "See, the virgin Dorothy sends you these from the garden of her Bridegroom, even as she promised you." Highly astonished, for it was February and everything in nature was frozen, Theophilus received the gifts and cried out: "Truly indeed, Christ is God." And soon he too died a martyr's death for publicly confessing the faith.

3. Holy Mass (Statuit). From the Common of a Confessor-Bishop. The *Gospel* recounts how Jesus sent out the seventy-two disciples to preach. Our thoughts light on Titus alongside the apostle of the Gentiles during one of his missionary journeys. In the *Collect* we again admire the liturgy's thoughtfulness; for a passage from the Epistle to Titus is woven into the text: ". . . that we should live temperately and justly and piously in this world" (Tit. 2:12).

4. The Epistle to St. Titus. It would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Church if on the day we celebrate the feast of a saint, we read something by or about the saint, or a document from the century in which he lived. This would aid us in acquiring the spirit of the saint and in modeling our lives after

him. We have had several examples in the past week, viz., the life of St. Anthony by St. Athanasius, the authentic Acts of the martyr St. Polycarp, the letters of St. Ignatius.

Today and tomorrow we should read and study St. Paul's Epistle to Titus. Surely our saint esteemed this letter which he had received from his great teacher very highly and made it the rule of his life. Now, for several days, we too should try to live according to the spirit of the Epistle. Note, first of all, that it is a pastoral letter and hence can serve as a pastoral instruction for everyone in charge of souls; it is, in fact, a Magna Charta of priestly solicitude. The layman, too, will find much good in its pages. Cull out for special reflection the sublime passages on Christ. (The Epistles for the first two Masses on Christmas are taken from St. Paul's letter to Titus, 2:11-15 and 3:4-7, respectively.)

Our personal libraries ought to contain suitable literature by and about the saints in the sanctoral cycle.

February 7

ST. ROMUALD, Abbot

Penance with a joyful heart

1. St. Romuald. *Day of death*: June 19, 1027. Today marks the transfer of his remains from Val di Castro. *Grave*: at the monastery of St. Blase in Fabriano. The feast was instituted by Clement VIII in 1595. *Picture*: wearing the white Camaldolese habit, with a ladder upon which his monks are climbing heavenward. *Life*. St. Romuald, the founder of the Camaldolese Order, could not decide for a considerable time whether to serve God in religion or remain in the world. After his father had killed a relative in a duel at which he was forced to be present, he went to the monastery of St. Apollinaris, near Ravenna, and did penance for forty days. Later, he entered this same monastery as a monk. Then he became a follower of the hermit Marinus in Venice. In the course of time he founded an order of hermits which received its name after the most famous of his foundations, Camalduli in Tuscany.

Romuald's was one of the strictest orders for men in the West (actually a branch of the Benedictine Order). The members live isolated from one another in small huts, observing strictest silence and perpetual fasting, constantly praying or engaged in manual labor. Our saint enjoyed the special grace of bringing sinners, particularly those of rank and power, back to God. When he died, he was a little over seventy years; he had never used a bed, had always sought out ways of practicing severest penances. Fifteen years later his pupil, the holy doctor of the Church, St. Peter Damian, wrote his biography.

"His greatness lies in the rigorous and austere character of his interpretation of monastic life—an approach that was quite singular and unique. In the deepest recesses of his being, Romuald was an ascetic, a monk; not perhaps, a monk of that serene peace and self-possession exemplified by St. Benedict in his life and described by him in his Rule. Nor was Romuald an organizer who through prudent legislation enabled his spirit to flourish and affect great numbers. He reminds us of the stolid figures inhabiting the Eastern deserts, men who by most rigorous mortification and severest self-inflicted penances gave a wanton world a living example of recollection and contemplation. Their very lives constituted the most powerful sermon. It is in company with men like these that St. Romuald continues to live." *

2. **Points from Romuald's Life.** Romuald was not at all a fluent reader. Whenever he made another of his many mistakes, Marinus, his teacher, beat him on his left cheek. Finally it became too much for Romuald. "But, dear master," he said modestly, "hit me on the right cheek in the future. My left ear is almost deaf." The master was surprised at such patience and thereafter acted more considerately.

The saint loved to say, "Better to pray one psalm with devotion and compunction than a hundred with distraction."

When the holy man felt his end was near, he retired to the monastery at Val di Castro. After so many journeys he was eager to begin his final pilgrimage to an eternal resting place.

* *Bibel und Liturgie*, vol. 2, p. 145f.

There he had a cell and a small chapel built, in which he could silently await death. Even though his aged body was growing weaker, he would neither lie down nor modify his strict fast more than absolutely necessary.

On a certain day, breathing became difficult, his strength vanished, and great fatigue overcame him. As the sun was beginning to set, he bade the two brothers who were with him to leave and lock his cell, and not to return until time for Lauds. Against their better judgment they consented, but then remained outside the door and listened. After a while, they no longer heard him breathe. They entered and lit the lamp. Romuald had passed away, quietly and alone, as he had told his brethren twenty years before.*

3. Holy Mass (Os justi). From the Common of an Abbot. Abbots occupy an intermediate place between bishops and confessors. In his community the abbot is the head and the father, but does not possess the plentitude of priestly power as bishops do. This is expressed in the Mass. We see the abbot as the faithful and prudent administrator who, at the head of the family, provides the proper measure of bread at meal time (*Comm.* This same text appears as the Communion in the Common of a Confessor-Bishop and also in the Common of Doctors).

As a religious he faithfully fulfilled the Lord's counsel, he "left everything . . . house, brethren, father, mother, and lands" for Christ's sake, and therefore will shine with a greater glory than others at the parousia (*Gosp.*). Today, as he died, the Lord "met him with blessings" and "gave him his heart's desire . . . a crown of precious stones upon his head" (*Grad.* and *Off.*). Through the graces of holy Mass we can already take part in this elevation to glory.

The *Lesson* refers to his selection and installation as abbot, acts for which God was ultimately responsible. The eremitical monk tries to fulfill the Gospel injunction literally. He "leaves all things" without exception. Romuald founded a new order

* Cf. H. Bihlmeyer, *Vom Leben und Leiden unserer lieben Heiligen*, p. 156.

of hermits, dedicated wholly to penance and mortification. Nevertheless, he bequeathed to his followers who expiate the sins of their fellow men, two priceless gifts—interior happiness and common worship. Though practicing the severest penances, the saint's face was always so cheerful as to gladden all who saw him. In the liturgy we too have the opportunity to unite a spirit of penance with happiness of heart.

February 8

ST. JOHN OF MATHA, Confessor

He freed his neighbor from bondage of body and soul

1. St. John of Matha. *Day of death*: December 17, 1213. *Grave*. His body was interred at St. Thomas de Formis, but later transferred to Madrid. Today's feast in his honor was introduced in 1694. *Life*. John of Matha founded the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (Trinitarians). Its members dedicated themselves to the heroic work of ransoming Christian slaves.

When John was offering the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the first time, he had a vision in which an angel appeared clothed in a white, gleaming garment, a red and blue cross on his breast, and his arms protectingly spread over two manacled slaves, a Christian and a Moor. Divinely illumined, the man of God immediately realized that he was being called to ransom captives.

He joined St. Felix of Valois in this great work, traveled frequently to North Africa and the coast of Spain, worked tirelessly in his noble mission. For many years the saint also acted as court chaplain and confessor to Pope Gregory IX. In France, he founded the monastery of Cerfroid in the diocese of Meaux. His was a heroic charity. Let us help our neighbor to cast off the shackles of sin and become spiritually free.

2. Holy Mass (Os justi). The Mass is from the Common of a Confessor, the beautiful Mass on the "watchful servant." A proper *Collect* relates the work of St. John to daily life, "Through God's assistance may we be delivered from bondage in body and soul."

February 9

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

ST. APOLLONIA, Virgin and Martyr

A champion of Mary's divine Motherhood

1. St. Cyril. *Day of death*: June 27, 444. *Grave*: unknown. *Feast*: prescribed by Pope Leo XIII in 1882. *Life*. St. Cyril is one of the great Greek fathers of the Church. He was chosen by divine Providence to be the shield and champion of the Church against Nestorius, who denied the unity of person in Christ. If this heresy had succeeded, Mary would not be called the Mother of God.

Excepting Sts. Athanasius and Augustine, his equal as a defender of orthodoxy can hardly be found in the Church's history. His greatest achievement was the successful direction of the ecumenical council at Ephesus (431), of which he was the soul (Pope Celestine had appointed him papal legate). In this council two important dogmas were defined, viz., that there is but one person in Christ, and that Mary in the literal sense of the word can be called the Mother of God (*Theotokos*). His successful defense of the latter doctrine is his greatest title to honor, a point noted in today's Collect.

His writings show such depth and clarity that the Greeks called him the "seal of the fathers." He died in 444 A.D., after having been bishop for thirty-two years. In Rome, the basilica of St. Mary Major stands as a most venerable monument to the honor paid Mary at the Council of Ephesus. On the arch leading into the sanctuary important incidents in the lives of Jesus and Mary are depicted in mosaic.

2. Holy Mass (In medio). Note how certain texts in this Mass from the Common of Doctors apply to our saint, e.g., "preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season . . . for there shall come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:1-8). St. Cyril lived in such a period. He

was obliged to fight strenuously against the heresiarchs. But now he shines as a bright light in the candelabra of the Church (*Gosp.*).

The three Orations are proper; the *Collect* recalls how Cyril was "the invincible champion of Mary's divine Motherhood" and begs that we may be saved by her maternal protection. The *Secret* prays (again in reference to Cyril's struggles for the faith) that we may "worthily receive into our hearts our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who is co-eternal with God in His glory." The *Postcommunion* beseeches that "we may be enabled worthily to serve the most holy Mother of God's only-begotten Son" (such a Postcommunion could not have been composed in ancient times).

The feast of St. Cyril was introduced in the Western Church by Leo XIII for the purpose of inspiring Christendom to work for the unification of separated Churches.

3. St. Apollonia. The Martyrology reads: "At Alexandria the holy virgin Apollonia. Under the Emperor Decius (249-251) her teeth were beaten out; then the executioners built and lit a funeral pyre, and threatened to burn her alive unless she would repeat their blasphemies. After some reflection she suddenly tore herself loose from her tormentors and threw herself into the flames. The fire of the Holy Spirit that glowed within her was more intense than the burning pyre. Her executioners were astounded to see a weak woman willingly embracing death with such determination before they were ready to carry out their threats."

The saint was already well on in years. An account of St. Apollonia's martyrdom was written by Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (died 265), a contemporary. She is honored as the patroness against toothache.

Apollonia, it might seem, committed suicide. Her act was used by the ancients as proof that it is permitted to escape dishonor or persecution through voluntary death. But the most authoritative moralists declare that even in such cases suicide is not permitted, and seek to justify Apollonia's heroic act by assuming that she acted according to a special mandate from

God; without such a divine injunction no one is allowed to follow her example. The saints are not to be imitated on every point.

February 10

ST. SCHOLASTICA, Virgin

In the form of a dove she entered heaven

1. St. Scholastica was the sister of St. Benedict, the father of Western monasticism. Like her brother, she dedicated herself to God from early youth. Information on the virgin Scholastica is very scanty. In his Second Book of Dialogues (Chap. 33 and 34) Pope St. Gregory has described for us the last meeting between brother and sister (cf. 2 nocturn):

"His sister Scholastica, who had been consecrated to God in early childhood, used to visit with him once a year. On these occasions he would go to meet her in a house belonging to the monastery a short distance from the entrance. For this particular visit he joined her there with a few of his disciples and they spent the whole day singing God's praises and conversing about the spiritual life.

When darkness was setting in they took their meal together and continued their conversation at table until it was quite late. Then the holy nun said to him, 'Please do not leave me tonight, brother. Let us keep on talking about the joys of heaven til morning.' 'What are you saying, sister?' he replied. 'You know that I cannot stay away from the monastery.' The sky was so clear at the time, there was not a cloud in sight.

At her brother's refusal Scholastica folded her hands on the table and rested her head upon them in earnest prayer. When she looked up again, there was a sudden burst of lightning and thunder accompanied by such a downpour that Benedict and his companions were unable to set foot outside the door. By shedding a flood of tears while she prayed, this holy nun had darkened the cloudless sky with a heavy rain. The storm began as soon as her prayer was over. In fact, the two coin-

cided so closely that the thunder was already resounding as she raised her head from the table. The very instant she ended her prayer the rain poured down.

Realizing that he could not return to the abbey in this terrible storm, Benedict complained bitterly. 'God forgive you, sister!' he said. 'What have you done?' Scholastica simply answered, 'When I appealed to you, you would not listen to me. So I turned to my God and He heard my prayer. Leave now if you can. Leave me here and go back to your monastery.'

This, of course, he could not do. He had no choice now but to stay, in spite of his unwillingness. They spent the entire night together and both of them derived great profit from the holy thoughts they exchanged about the interior life. The next morning Scholastica returned to her convent and Benedict to his monastery.

Three days later as he stood in his room looking up toward the sky, he beheld his sister's soul leaving her body and entering the heavenly court in the form of a dove. Overjoyed at her eternal glory, he gave thanks to God in hymns of praise. Then, after informing his brethren of her death, he sent some of them to bring her body to the abbey and bury it in the tomb he had prepared for himself. The bodies of these two were now to share a common resting place, just as in life their souls had always been one in God."

Her tomb is at Monte Cassino.

2. **Holy Mass.** Today's Mass, from the Common of Virgins (*Dilexisti*), easily surpasses all other formularies found in the Common from the viewpoint of theme unity. Practically all the component parts point to the bride-bridegroom relationship. The Church, Christ's spotless bride, makes her appearance in the holy virgin whose feast we are celebrating.

In the *Introit* we sing the "Church's Nuptial Hymn." The procession is a bridal one, with Scholastica leading. Picture to yourself a solemn pontifical procession advancing toward the altar while the faithful sing the complete text of Psalm 44. Christ is the royal Bridegroom; Scholastica (the Church) is His royal bride.

In the *Epistle* we are addressed as brides of Christ. The Bridegroom is jealous of His bride. He does not wish to share her with anyone; she should be "presented to her Bridegroom, Christ, as a chaste virgin." Psalm 44, the Church's nuptial hymn, is used for all four chants. When the deacon clad in festal dalmatic proceeds in solemn procession to the ambo with the Gospel book (Christ), we have another nuptial procession. There follows the *Gospel* with its thought-provoking Parable of the Five Wise Virgins (the five foolish serve only as dark background). *We* are these virginal brides (the acolytes with their candles make the symbolism more realistic).

At the *Offertory* procession, we brides of Christ approach nearer to our Beloved. The altar is Christ, the Offertory gifts are the lamps filled with oil, gifts for our Lover. During the Offertory procession the nuptial psalm is again sung; it occasions a new train of thought. The altar with its rich drapes ("embroidered in gold, with brilliant colors"—Ps. 44:13 f) reminds us of the bridal queen, the Church, whom we surround as bridal virgins.

In the Sacrifice proper the Bridegroom appears, and at the Communion banquet we go once more as virginal brides to meet Christ the Lord—*obviam Christo Domino*. (Note how the various chant texts take on their full meaning precisely in connection with the Mass action.) For the fourth time, the

Church's nuptial hymn is sung. During this entire day we feel ourselves as Christ's brides while the words of the Epistle keep ringing in our ears: "I am jealous for you with a divine jealousy. . . ."

With a soul innocent as a dove Scholastica flew to heaven. Inspired by her example may we order our lives in such a way as to insure our own everlasting happiness.

February 11

THE APPARITION OF MARY AT LOURDES

A Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet

The proper approach is necessary to evaluate today's feast correctly. Frequently the Church uses a local event in order to present and develop an important dogma. This must be remembered when discussing such feasts as that of the holy Cross, the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel, and other feasts commemorative or votive in nature. In today's observance we should see a vindication as well as a presentation of the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

1. The Apparition at Lourdes. The many miracles which have been performed through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes prompted the Church to institute a special commemorative feast, the "Apparition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary." The Office gives the historical background. Four years after the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the Blessed Virgin appeared a number of times to a very poor and holy girl named Bernadette. The actual spot was in a grotto on the bank of the Gave River near Lourdes.

The Immaculate Conception had a youthful appearance and was clothed in a pure white gown and mantle, with an azure blue girdle. A golden rose adorned each of her bare feet. On her first apparition, February 11, 1858, the Blessed Virgin bade the girl make the sign of the Cross piously and say the rosary

with her. Bernadette saw her take the rosary that was hanging from her arm into her hands. This was repeated in subsequent apparitions.

With childlike simplicity Bernadette once sprinkled holy water on the vision, fearing that it was a deception of the evil spirit; but the Blessed Virgin smiled pleasantly, and her face became even more lovely. The third time Mary appeared she invited the girl to come to the grotto daily for two weeks. Now she frequently spoke to Bernadette. On one occasion she ordered her to tell the ecclesiastical authorities to build a church on the spot and to organize processions. Bernadette also was told to drink and wash in the spring still hidden under the sand.

Finally on the feast of the Annunciation, the beautiful Lady announced her name, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

The report of cures occurring at the grotto spread quickly and the more it spread, the greater the number of Christians who visited the hallowed place. The publicity given these miraculous events on the one hand and the seeming sincerity and innocence of the girl on the other made it necessary for the bishop of Tarbes to institute a judicial inquiry. Four years later he declared the apparitions to be supernatural and permitted the public veneration of the Immaculate Conception in the grotto. Soon a chapel was erected, and since that time numberless pilgrims come every year to Lourdes to fulfill promises or to beg graces.

2. **Holy Mass (Vidi civitatem).** For the most part the Mass has its own texts which allude to the wondrous apparition of Mary at Lourdes. The Immaculate is the holy city "descending arrayed as a bride" (*Intr.*). The *Collect's* introductory clause corresponds to that on December 8. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (*Epist.*). "Arise my love, my beautiful one; and come; my dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall" (*Grad.*). This verse recalls the grotto of the apparition.

In the *Gospel* and in the *Offertory* hymn we hear the "Ave" that never ceases to resound at Mary's shrine. The Eucharist,

the bubbling spring that renders fruitful the ground of the soul, is symbolized by the miraculous fountain at Lourdes (*Comm.*). In the *Postcommunion* there is another allusion to the Lourdes pilgrimages, viz., through the blessings just received may we travel in safety to our heavenly fatherland.

February 12

THE SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS OF THE SERVITE ORDER, Confessors

Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

1. **The Seven Holy Founders.** A rare event! Seven men of noble lineage forsake the world and live together in brotherly harmony. In their seven bodies there is but one soul, the same virtues and devotions unite them. Even death does not part them. For their bones, which rest in one coffin, are so intermingled that parts belonging to one body cannot be distinguished from the rest.

These seven men were the founders of the Servite Order, a community instituted for the special purpose of cultivating the spirit of penance and contemplating the passion of Christ and Mary's Seven Sorrows. Due to the spirit of humility cherished by the members of the Order, their accomplishments are not too widely known. But in the field of home missions great things are to their credit, and certainly they have benefited millions by arousing devotion to the Mother of Sorrows.

The Breviary tells us that in the midst of the party strife current during the thirteenth century, God called seven men from the nobility of Florence. In the year 1233 they met and prayed together most fervently. The Blessed Mother appeared to each of them individually and urged them to begin a more perfect life. Disregarding birth and wealth, in sackcloth under shabby and well-worn clothing, they withdrew to a small building in the country. It was September 8, selected so that they

might begin to live a more holy life on the very day when the Mother of God began to live her holy life.

Soon after, when the seven were begging alms from door to door in the streets of Florence, they suddenly heard children's voices calling to them, "Servants of holy Mary." Among these children was St. Philip Benizi, then just five months old. Hereafter they were known by this name, first heard from the lips of children. In the course of time they retired into solitude on Monte Senario and gave themselves wholly to contemplation and penance. Leo XIII canonized the Holy Founders and introduced today's feast in 1888.

2. **Holy Mass (Justi).** New Mass formularies do not always conform to standard ancient types.* Today's reflects the classical taste of Pope Leo XIII. Its general purpose is to mirror the lives of the Seven Holy Founders. In the *Introit*, we hear the "just" singing their common song of praise. The final phrase of the antiphon reminds us of the children of Florence who gave the Servite Order its name. Psalm 8 was chosen with reference to the same incident, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have fashioned praise" (Ps. 8:3).

In the *Collect* the Church rejoices over having been enriched with a new family of servants, while weaving into the prayer the chief purpose of the Order, viz., to renew the memory of Mary's sorrows. The *Lesson* praises these "men of renown, our fathers" who have accomplished such marvels, and have bequeathed to us, their heirs, so glorious an example. In the *Gospel*, it is the Lord Himself who assures them of reward for "having left all things to follow Him." "The hundredfold . . . and life everlasting" is now ready before them.

In the *Offertory* hymn we see the seven saints on Monte Senario, praying and offering pleasing sacrifice to God. To some extent the *Secret* departs from traditional classic form. At the *Communion*, we see the fruit ripen, the seeds for which our saints planted in tears and toil. It is our privilege to harvest this fruit in the sacrifice banquet. Our concluding prayer is that we, like the Holy Founders, "may steadfastly remain at

* Schuster, *Liber Sacramentorum*, Vol. 6, p. 209.

the foot of the Cross of Jesus in company with Mary His Mother, and may deserve to participate in the fruits of the Redemption."

"As one love of brotherhood and monastic life joined them together on earth, so one grave holds their dead bodies, and one honor is accorded them by the people. The Supreme Pontiffs Clement XI and Benedict XIII accordingly confirmed this honor which for centuries had been given to them in common" (The Roman Breviary, 2 nocturn).

February 14

ST. VALENTINE, Martyr

The martyr's crown

1. St. Valentine. *Day of death*: February 14, 269 (according to the Roman Martyrology). *Grave*: Rome, in the basilica dedicated to his honor. *Life*. This holy priest (the missal, contrary to usual practice, introduces him as "*priest* and martyr") died for the faith under Claudius II. The Martyrology says, "At Rome, on the Flaminian Way, the heavenly birthday of the blessed martyr Valentine, a priest. After performing many miraculous cures and giving much wise counsel he was beaten and beheaded under Claudius Caesar."

The church in which he is buried existed already in the fourth century and was the first sanctuary Roman pilgrims visited upon entering the Eternal City. (The saint is not to be confused with the Bishop of Terni who bears the same name.)

2. Holy Mass (In virtute). The joy Christians experience after triumphing over suffering is the dominant spirit in the "First Mass of a Martyr Not a Bishop." The priest entering for the *Introit* makes us think of our saint now in glory. He is rejoicing in God's power, he is happy among the elect; for his heart's deepest yearning is stilled, he stands as a conqueror wearing the crown of victory. (The entire Psalm 20 would be appropriate here. You need only to substitute the word "saint" for the word "king.")

The *Collect* begs the saint to deliver us "from the many dangers that beset us." In the *Epistle* the Church describes how

Valentine lived, how the Lord "conducted the just . . . through the right ways and showed him the kingdom of God." It was God who guided him in the midst of battle; who aided him when needy; who descended with him into the depth of the prison and was with him when bound; who finally gave him "the sceptre of the kingdom" and "everlasting glory" (Wis. 10:10-14). In the Book of Wisdom the passage concerns Joseph, the son of Jacob; its application to Valentine becomes clearer if the picture of the boy sold into Egypt is kept in mind.

The *Gradual* is a real chorus, the congregation's response to the Lesson, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord . . . his children shall be mighty upon the earth" (Ps. 111:1-2). We are Valentine's heirs ("his children") and together with him offer this Sacrifice.

Our Lord speaks of taking up the Cross and following Him in the *Gospel*. From Him we learn the meaning of martyrdom and how to make it part of our lives. Christ speaks hard words, "I did not come to bring peace but the sword." Christianity means conflict, not a life of ease and pleasure. It is a war against flesh and blood, and this involves "taking up the Cross" and following Jesus. Our Savior is pointing constantly to the holy martyrs who have fulfilled His command most perfectly. Even though we may not be thrown into a life and death struggle as was our saint, we still can share the honor of "bearing witness" to Christ in little things, even if it calls for nothing more than reaching a cup of water to His servants.

In the *Offertory* hymn, we see the day's saint proceeding to the altar adorned with the crown of glory. For the *Communion* it is not the usual victory song but the Master's sobering words, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Why this text at the Communion? Perhaps the Church wants to say: after Communion the Way of the Cross begins, and the source of your strength is in this sacred banquet.

February 15

STS. FAUSTINUS AND JOVITA, Martyrs

Love of Christ

1. **Sts. Faustinus and Jovita.** *Day of death*: February 15, about 120 A.D. (according to the Martyrology). The feast was

JESUS CHRIST

yesterday - today - and forever!

introduced into the calendar toward the end of the Middle Ages. *Grave*: Brescia (northern Italy). *Their life*. The brothers Faustinus and Jovita preached the faith with great courage in Brescia during the persecution of Trajan. When bishop Apollonius, who had hidden himself during those troublesome times, was informed of their work, he ordained the former priest and the latter deacon. Soon, however, they were thrown into prison and subjected to much torment by the Emperor Hadrian, who at that moment was in Brescia. Finally they were beheaded. The Breviary adds that they also suffered in Milan, Rome, and Naples. Their relics are venerated in Brescia.

2. Holy Mass (Salus autem). Today's is the third formulary in the Common for Several Martyrs. For a summarizing picture imagine Christ appearing at the head of His "white robed army of martyrs" in preview for the return on the last day (*Epist.* and *Gosp.*) The *Introit* directs our thoughts to the life of today's martyrs (the remaining verses of the psalm give further detail); evil persons were strong and fortunate, they oppressed the good, yes, tortured Faustinus and Jovita and put them to death, but God, the "salvation of the just," did not forsake them.

In the *Epistle*, the martyrs speak to us. They recall the "former days" when Christians, after "being enlightened (baptized), endured great suffering." They languished in prisons, sustaining the loss of all earthly goods with joy. Will you join them? "You have need of patience that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise: For yet a very little while, and He who is to come, will come (Heb. 10:32-38). (Now at Mass we are witnessing a dress rehearsal of the parousia.)

The *Gradual* reflects the sentiments of the Epistle. The martyrs cried out in their need and God heard them. It will not be otherwise with us, "For the Lord is close to the brokenhearted; and those who are crushed in spirit He saves." In the *Gospel* Christ appears as the rewarder of martyrs (*Tract*), and seeks to instill the spirit of martyrdom in His followers; what we hear during the silent hour of worship, must be preached aloud to the whole world.

We must not fear those who can "kill the body"; in fact, apart from everlasting death, we need not fear anything. Rather our efforts will be directed toward developing a lively sense of God's good Providence, realizing that not even a hair

goes lost without His knowledge. This attitude will aid us in becoming Christ's heralds upon earth, so that He "will confess us before the angels of God" at the second coming. Both Readings instill the spirit of martyrdom. In the first, the martyrs speak to us, in the second Christ Himself. Both have the same purpose, both come to a climax in the parousia theme.

In the *Offertory* hymn, it is martyrdom again, but from a higher plane, "The souls of the just are in the hand of God . . . in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peace" (Wis. 3:1-3), i.e., they are enjoying the beatific vision. The *Communion* reminds us of the dark catacombs from which these witnesses unto blood came forth. What the Lord in the nightly stillness whispered into their ears, they "preached from the housetops." This is our duty, too. In the morning Mass Christ comes to us softly and, as it were, whispers in the darkness. Then we return to a hostile world as His confessors. In what does the secret of our strength lie? In an abiding love of Christ. May such love come to us through receiving His body and imitating the example of the saints.

February 18

ST. SIMEON, Bishop and Martyr

A blood relative of Christ

1. St. Simeon. A blood relative of Christ, a martyr from early apostolic times! Succeeding the apostle James, Simeon, the son of Cleophus, was, it may be said, the first bishop of Jerusalem. Under the Emperor Trajan he was arraigned before Attikus, the governor, on charges of being a Christian and a relative of Jesus. For at a certain period, all descendants of David were apprehended. After enduring all types of torture, he was affixed to a cross, even as His Savior. Those present marvelled how a man of such advanced age, he was 120 years

old, could so steadfastly and joyously bear the excruciating pains of crucifixion. He died on the 18th of February, 106 A.D.

The siege and the destruction of Jerusalem took place during his episcopacy. He accompanied the Christian community to Pella.

Application. Before our eyes today's liturgy places a venerable, aged bishop. He was a blood relative of Jesus—on a cross, too, and in Jerusalem the relationship became even closer. He is a saint who can strengthen us in our weakness and in our struggle against sin.

2. Holy Mass (Statuit). From the Common. I will make a special effort to celebrate this Mass with St. Simeon and in his spirit. As an echo of our martyr's cry to heaven, I pray the Kyrie. How fervently he must have prayed, "Lord, have mercy on me," as the executioners approached. Then the Gloria, his song of praise and thanksgiving. Simeon next rises to preach in the *Epistle* and *Gospel.* "Blessed is the man who endures trials." No one is better qualified to make this statement than he, he who today wears "the crown of life." Presently he turns to me: what is your trial, your temptation? And how do you meet it?

February 22

THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER AT ANTIOCH

Praise him in the chair of the ancients (Ps. 106:32)

1. The Feast. Of the two celebrations in honor of St. Peter's Chair that are celebrated in the Roman Church, today's is easily the more venerable and ancient and, until the 16th century, the only one; moreover until that date the feast was simply that of St. Peter's Chair. Antioch did not come into consideration, there was no question of commemorating the various places at which the Prince of the Apostles stopped, rather the fact of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. Only since 1558, when the feast in honor of Peter's Chair at Rome was added on the 18th of January, was today's linked with his stay at Antioch.

According to ancient tradition Peter was the founder of the church at Antioch, the first church consisting of Gentile Chris-

tians, and remained its actual head for seven years. The Martyrology reads: "At Antioch, the feast honoring the Chair of the holy apostle Peter. In this city the followers of Jesus were first called Christians."

Application. One of the second nocturn lessons contains this sentence: "By celebrating this feast of Peter's Chair, the office of the priesthood is honored." For the two go hand in hand. Thus the glory of the Church shines more resplendently when greater veneration is shown the sacred priesthood.

The persons officially constituted for performing the liturgy deserve our esteem and support. By them, for the most part, the Church's life of grace is preserved, deepened, and channeled to the faithful, in cooperation assuredly with the general priesthood possessed by all the baptized. When we look at those in Holy Orders, including even the highest dignitaries, we will regard them first and foremost as mediators and dispensers of God's graces, privileged persons whom at the same time we honor as teachers and rulers.

2. Holy Mass (Statuit). The Mass formulary, which is not very old, places Peter, the first bishop of Antioch, in our very midst. In the *Introit*, we see him as the officiating priest. In the *Epistle*, he addresses us "sojourners of the Dispersion . . . chosen unto the sanctification of the Spirit." He proclaims the joyful message of "an incorruptible inheritance—undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven" of which the Eucharist is the pledge. Truly it is worthwhile to be tried now for a "little time" in the fire of temptation in order to become worthy recipients of the revelation of Jesus Christ that today takes place in the holy Sacrifice.

In the *Gospel* we relive with Peter that great day at Caesarea Philippi, when Christ made him the rock of His Church. Our souls, too, must be foundations of stone upon which God can build His kingdom. The words, *Tu es Petrus . . .*, give the Mass its general tone (*Off., Comm.*). Try to apply them personally. In the *Gradual* the Church praises Peter's elevation to the first See of Christendom. By means of the holy Eucharist, Christ continues to build His Church within us (*Comm.*).

February 23

ST. PETER DAMIAN, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

"A tongue purpled with the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb must never be defiled by the dregs of hollow speech"

1. St. Peter Damian. *Day of death*: February 22, 1072. *Grave*: in the Cistercian church at Faenza, Italy. *Life.* St. Peter Damian must be numbered among the greatest of the Church's reformers in the Middle Ages, yes, even among the truly extraordinary persons of all times. In Damian the scholar, men admire wealth of wisdom: in Damian the preacher of God's word, apostolic zeal; in Damian the monk, austerity and self-denial; in Damian the priest, piety and zeal for souls; in Damian the cardinal, loyalty and submission to the Holy See together with generous enthusiasm and devotion for the good of Mother Church. He was a personal friend of Pope Gregory VII. He died in 1072 at the age of 65. The Mass (In medio) is from the Common of Doctors.

2. Excerpts from His Life. That even saints like Peter Damian must battle with temptations and weaknesses is shown by the following confessions.* "Woe to me, vile creature! I have done everything that is evil. In so long a life what command of divine life have I fulfilled? One fault especially do I deplore most bitterly: my inclination to cracking jokes. It has always caused me trouble, nor did things improve very much even after I entered the monastery. I have often fought against this wild monster and with a heavy hammer have crushed its bite. For a while I was able to control it, but never could conquer it entirely. Even under the guise of inner joy, when, for example, I wish to act pleasantly toward my brethren, I fall into idle speech.

I, poor writer, suffer too because of my irascible nature. So often the smallest irritations destroy my peace of mind. But anger may demand from me what it wills, it may rage, foam, gnash its teeth—it will not receive my exterior cooperation as far as I am able to withhold it. I will not lend it my hand to strike. I will not move my tongue or lips so that its bitter

* Bihlmeyer, *Vom Leben und Leiden unserer lieben Heiligen*, p. 156f.

gall may pass on through them. Persons may accuse me of whatever they will; I will remain patient because I cannot expect to reap a reward from another's virtue. Where there is no temptation requiring struggle, there will be no crown of reward.

At times, too, the fire of sensuality burns within me and inflames my heart and limbs. It can try its worst, I shall never cooperate. It is quite possible for me to control my evil nature by reason, but I can never utterly destroy it."

On one occasion he wrote to a young nephew, "If I may speak figuratively, drive out the roaring beasts from your domain; do not cease from protecting yourself daily by receiving the Flesh and Blood of the Lord. Let your secret foe see your lips reddened with the Blood of Christ. He will shudder, cower back, and flee to his dark, dank retreat.

I know a brother in Christ who is, one may say, always ready for a trip. If temptation to sensuality comes upon him, he says to his soul: 'Come, let us take a stroll.' Immediately he permits his mind to wander about in graveyards and cemeteries. When he reflects that all flesh must suffer affliction and torment, and that the bodies rotting there were once so strong and lusty he becomes doubly certain that his body too will soon be what these already are. He gives short shrift to lust who casts his eyes upon a corpse. At an open grave, lust makes no attacks."

February 24 (25)

ST. MATTHIAS, Apostle

A preacher of Christ's resurrection

1. **St. Matthias.** For many centuries Matthias was not accorded full honor as an apostle because their number, twelve, was rounded out by St. Paul. But he was named among apostolic men such as Stephen and Barnabas; and this explains

why he is listed in the second rather than in the first group of saints mentioned in the Roman Canon. It was Pope Pius V who gave his feast a vigil and placed him in the same category as the other apostles.

Today, therefore, we interrupt the sequence of sober Lenten liturgies to celebrate a feast in honor of an apostle. (The Lenten ferial Mass may not be celebrated; its Gospel is read and thus some reference is made to the Lenten season.) After Christ's ascension, Matthias was elected to the apostolic college to replace Judas, the traitor. This occurred while the apostles and the disciples were gathered together in the cenacle, preparing themselves for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Further details on the life and activity of the apostle Matthias have not come down to us. Like the other apostles, he undoubtedly journeyed to distant lands, sowed the seed of God's word in the hearts of men by preaching the Gospel, perhaps in Ethiopia. A memorable sentence about him is found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, "He exhausted his body by mortification to make his spirit subject to the Crucified."

He died a martyr's death for the sake of Christ. Ancient accounts tell how the Empress, St. Helena, brought a portion of his relics to Rome where they are now venerated at St. Mary Major, and his head to the Church of St. Matthias in Trier.

2. **Holy Mass (Mihi autem).** In the *Introit*, the Church praises the apostles as "friends" of God and princes in His kingdom. The *Epistle* reports on Matthias' election to the apostolic college. In the *Gradual*, we behold the multitude who were won for the kingdom of heaven through his preaching. The apostle and we are the "little ones" to whom the Father has revealed the good tidings of salvation and to whom in today's Mass He is revealing these mysteries anew (*Gosp.*).

As the narrative continues there rises before our mind's eye the exalted, yet loving, picture that Jesus has drawn of Himself, one that now during the holy Sacrifice becomes alive and real in our very midst: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." In the *Offertory* hymn, we rejoice over the great success accompanying the apostles' labors; for through-

out the whole world men accepted their message. Through the sacrifice banquet we share mystically in the enthronement of the apostles (*Comm.*).

Matthias was selected as an apostle that he might become "a witness with us of Christ's resurrection." This was the main task of the new apostle, and it remains such today for every Christian. Every feast of an apostle is an impressive sermon on the work of Christ's redemption, His death, and His resurrection. We, too, should be witnesses of Christ's resurrection by our faith, by our hope in a resurrection from the dead, and especially by a virtuous Christian life. If by our deeds we "seek the things that are above," we will be genuine preachers and faithful witnesses.

February 27 (28)

ST. GABRIEL OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER, Confessor

See, I stand at the door and knock

1. **St. Gabriel.** *Day of death*: February 27, 1862. *Grave*: Passionist Church of Isola di Gran Sasso, now known as San Gabriele (Abruzzi, Italy). *Life.* On Ascension Day, 1920, Pope Benedict XV bestowed the honors of sainthood on a youth who is rightly called the Aloysius of the 19th century. He was Francis Possenti, known in religion as Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother.

Born in Assisi, January 3, 1838, he was given the name of the city's illustrious patron, St. Francis, at baptism. As a student in neighboring Spoleto, he led a good though rather worldly kind of life until God drew him closer to Himself through an illness. The decisive step was taken while seeing the highly honored miraculous picture of our Lady in Spoleto borne about in solemn procession. As his eyes followed our Blessed Mother, Francis felt the fire of divine love rising in his heart and almost at once made the resolve to join the Passionists, a religious congregation dedicated to the veneration of and meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ (1856).

After overcoming many difficulties, he carried out his resolution and received the religious name, Gabriel of the Mother of Sorrows. Even as a novice, he was regarded as a model of perfect holiness both within and beyond the cloister. The sufferings of Christ, the holy Eucharist as a memorial of His passion, and the Sorrowful Mother formed the foundation of his religious life.

Deep humility made him consider himself the least of his brethren; perfect obedience to the slightest wish of his superiors as well as the most careful watchings over his senses made him the perfect religious who already at the age of twenty-four was ready for heaven. He died in the year 1862. Pope Pius XI extended the Office and Mass of this holy youth to the universal Church.

2. **Holy Mass (Oculus Dei).** The Mass is composed of texts especially selected to reflect the character of the saint and his peculiar virtues. In the *Introit* we witness Gabriel's apotheosis. In life he was so unassuming and humble, now he stands gloriously before us as a saint of God. His elevation to sainthood fills us with wonder, while our voices sing praise to God. Psalm 72 begins with the outcry, "How good God is to Israel, to them that are of a right heart," but the whole psalm with its deep love of God is well suited to reveal the mystical soul of our saint.

The *Collect* emphasizes Gabriel's tender devotion to the Mother of Sorrows. The *Epistle*, from the First Letter of St. John, is in Missal context a sermon by our saint to modern youth: Overcome your teen-age temptations as I did—with God's help. That threefold yen for sin inside you will pass away like all worldly things. "Only he who does the will of God abides forever" (John 2:17).

Gradual: Greater than any earthly pleasure is "the multitude of sweetness that God has in store for those who fear Him." The *Gospel* begins by inculcating childlike simplicity and continues with the story of the rich young man who wanted to follow Jesus. The allusion to our saint is quite evident; he not only kept the law of God, but surrendered whatever he had

to follow Christ. In this he differed from the young man in the Gospel who went away sad (this is the reason why the story ends so abruptly).

In the *Offertory* Gabriel acknowledges himself as the "son of the handmaid," i.e., the child of the Mother of Sorrows. A beautiful *Communion* scene, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man listen to My voice, and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Apoc. 3:20). Gabriel actually had this blessed experience.

March 4

ST. CASIMIR, Confessor

ST. LUCIUS, Pope and Martyr

He could have sinned but did not

1. St. Casimir. *Day of death*: March 4, 1484. *Grave*: Vilna, Poland. *Picture*: a crown and sceptre at his feet, a lily in his hand. *Life*. Casimir, Prince of Poland and elected King of Hungary, was born in 1458. He died at the early age of 25, honored by all for his virginal purity and charitable love toward the poor. He, who is now the patron saint of Poland and regarded as a model of purity for youth cherished a most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The praises of the Mother of God were constantly on his lips, especially the tender and lovely *Omni die*, of which a copy was found beneath the right temple of his incorrupt body when his grave was opened. (He is not, however, as is commonly thought, the author of this hymn.)

Application. A noble youth, in the midst of court life and the allurements of the world, filled with contempt for secular

pursuits, living in spotless purity! What a powerful sermon for us who are so attached to the things of earth.

Omni die	Daily, daily
Dic Mariae	Sing to Mary;
Mea laudes anima:	Sing, my soul, her praises due!
Ejus festa,	All her feasts,
Ejus gesta	Her actions worship
Cole devotissima.	With the heart's devotion true.

2. St. Lucius. The Martyrology reads: "At Rome upon the Appian Way, the holy martyr, Pope Lucius. He was banished during the persecution of Emperor Valerian, but after some time by God's good providence succeeded in returning to his see. He strenuously combated the Novatians, until he finished his testimony by being beheaded. (Recent research claims that he died a natural death.) St. Cyprian bestowed the highest praise upon Pope Lucius (for his mild and forgiving spirit)." He ruled from 253 to 254. The epitaph on his tomb is still extant, and his body is venerated in the church of St. Cecilia, Rome.

March 6

STS. PERPETUA AND FELICITAS, Martyrs

Christ suffers in me

1. The Saints. *Day of death*: March 7, 202 or 203. *Grave*: unknown. A short time ago their epitaph was found in Carthage. *Life.* Vibia Perpetua, a well-to-do young woman and mother, and Felicitas, a slave who gave birth to a child three days before suffering a martyr's death, were catechumens. Against such prospective converts the persecution of Septimius Severus was particularly severe. These two holy women suffered death on the seventh of March in Carthage. The Breviary relates the following touching episode:

"Now the day had arrived when they were to be thrown to the wild beasts. Felicitas began to be sorrowful because she feared she would have to wait longer than her companions. For eight months she had been pregnant and therefore, according to Roman law, could not be executed before the birth

of the child. But the prayers of her fellow sufferers hastened her time and she gave birth to a baby girl.

While she was suffering from the pains of childbirth, one of the guards called out to her, 'If you are suffering so much now, what will you do when you are thrown to the wild beasts?' 'Now *I* suffer,' she answered, 'but there *Another* will be in me, who will suffer for me, because I will suffer for Him.'" "When she was in travail she had sorrow, but when she was set before the wild beasts she rejoiced" (Martyrology). Finally, on the seventh of March, these heroic women were led into the amphitheatre and severely scourged. Then they were tossed about by an exceptionally wild cow, gored, and thrown to the ground. The names of both women are honored daily in the Canon of the Mass.

2. **From the "Acts of the Martyrs."** The story of the sufferings of today's saints is preserved for us in authentic "Acts of the Martyrs" that were composed partly by the saints themselves, and partly by eyewitnesses (perhaps Tertullian). The account may be classed with the most beautiful portions of ancient Christian literature that have come down to us. Here is a passage taken at random:

"When we were still with the police authorities, my father, out of love for me, did not cease to speak, trying to make me apostatize. Then I said to him: 'Do you, for example, see this little vessel lying here, a small pitcher or something like it?' He said: 'Yes, I see it.' Then I asked him, 'Can it be called anything else than what it is?' And he said, 'No.' 'In the same way, I cannot call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian.'

Enraged by these words, he fell upon me, determined to tear my eyes out. After this disturbance he went away. During those few days that he was absent, I was grateful to God and revived my spirits. The respite also afforded me an opportunity to be baptized, and after having been washed by the saving waters, the Spirit revealed to me that I should ask for nothing else than fortitude while suffering in the flesh.

A few days later we were cast into a dungeon, and I was amazed because I had never before been in such darkness. A terrible day! Terrific heat! The prisoners were all thrown into

a heap by soldiers, and I was tortured with worry about my little child. Then the good deacons, Tertius and Pomponius, who served us, by paying money managed to arrange a transfer for several hours to a better place in the prison, where we could refresh ourselves. All went out of the dungeon for the brief respite and I fed my half smothered child.

I cared for and comforted Perpetua and consoled my brother, recommending him to the Son. I suffered severely because I saw them worrying over me. By these and other fears I was harassed for many days, but I succeeded in keeping the child with me in the prison. She recovered and I felt considerably relieved. The prison suddenly became a palace for me, so that I would rather live there than anywhere else. After several days court was convened; we were to be examined. My father came from the city, bowed down by deepest sorrow. He made his way to me, and tried to make me recant by saying: 'Daughter, have pity on my gray hair. Have pity on your father, even though you do not consider him worthy to be called your father. If I have raised you to the prime of life, if I have preferred you to all your brothers, do not now make a mockery of me before all men. Look upon your brothers, look upon your mother and aunt, look upon your child who will not survive you after your death. Bend your will, do not ruin us for none of us will be able to speak freely if anything should happen to you.'

He said this from motives of paternal love. He kissed my hands, threw himself at my feet, and in tears called me no longer his daughter but his mistress. The fate of my father made me sad for he alone of my whole family would not rejoice in my sufferings. I tried to console him with the words, 'In this tribunal only that will happen what God wills; for you should know that we do not stand in our own power, but in God's.' But he went away from me sorrowing."

March 7

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, Confessor and Doctor

Liturgy is faith praying

St. Thomas. *Day of Death*: March 7, 1274. *Grave*: Toulouse, his right arm in Rome. *Life*. Thomas ranks among the greatest

writers and theologians of all time. His most important work, the "Summa Theologica," an explanation and summary of the entire body of Catholic teaching, has been standard for centuries, even to our own day. At the Council of Trent it was consulted after the Bible.

To a deeply speculative mind, he joined a remarkable life of prayer, a precious memento of which has been left to us in the Office of Corpus Christi. Reputed as great already in life, he nevertheless remained modest, a perfect model of child-like simplicity and goodness. He was mild in word and kind in deed. He believed everyone was as innocent as he himself was. When someone sinned through weakness, Thomas bemoaned the sin as if it were his own. The goodness of his heart shone in his face, no one could look upon him and remain disconsolate. How he suffered with the poor and the needy was most inspiring. Whatever clothing or other items he could give away, he gladly did. He kept nothing superfluous in his efforts to alleviate the needs of others.

After he died his lifelong companion and confessor testified, "I have always known him to be as innocent as a five-year-old child. Never did a carnal temptation soil his soul, never did he consent to a mortal sin." He cherished a most tender devotion to St. Agnes, constantly carrying relics of this virgin martyr on his person. He died in 1274, at the age of fifty, in the abbey of Fossa Nuova. He is the patron saint of schools and of sacred theology.

Application. Liturgy is faith worshiping. Cultivate this approach to divine services and probe deeply into its possibilities.

March 8

ST. JOHN OF GOD, Confessor

God is love! Whoever abides in love, abides in God and God in him (motto of St. John's community)

1. St. John. *Day of death*: March 8, 1550. *Grave*: Granada. *Life.* In 1503, at the age of eight, John fled from his parents for some unknown reason. For a while he was a cowherd,

then a book dealer. Matters spiritual were of no particular interest until he heard the preaching of Blessed John of Avila. Then his conversion was so sincere and sudden that he was considered to be out of his mind. While rescuing the sick from a burning hospital at the risk of his own life, it became clear to him what his future work should be.

In 1540 he founded the Brothers of Mercy (approved by Pius V, 1572), a community dedicated to caring for the sick. The members bind themselves by a fourth vow, the service of the sick. Because of his work our saint has become the patron of hospitals and the dying. His name is in the Litany of the Dying. *Application.* There is something lacking in present day hospital methods that characterized the age-old practice of the Church, viz., a harmonious, organic relationship between liturgy and the care of the sick. Today's saint can show the way.

2. From St. John's Life.* A fire broke out in the kitchen of the hospital at Granada that had been founded by the Spanish king and queen, Ferdinand and Isabella. It threatened to spread to the large wards where hundreds of sick were lying. The storm and fire bells rang loudly. People rushed from all sides, John in the lead. The fire was beyond control, firemen and volunteers were unable to extinguish it. No one dared to enter the burning building from which came the pitiful cries of the sick in the agony of imminent and certain death. Fire and smoke choked the exits. Those who could still arise from their beds stood pleading at the windows. The scene was enough to drive a person insane.

John could not stand idly by. Disregarding smoke and flame, he rushed in among the sick, opened doors and windows, gave terse orders and directions as to how they who could might save themselves; some he led, others he dragged or carried into the open, often two at a time. When all the bedridden were safe, he wasted no time in throwing coverlets, bed clothing, chairs and other valuables out of the windows, thus saving the property of the poor.

Then he took an axe, climbed to the roof and began chopping away vigorously. Suddenly the liberated flames leapt up high beside him. He fled, only to continue his heroic work in an-

* Bihlmeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

other part of the building. There too a wave of fire soon stopped him. He was standing literally between two infernos. Moments passed, he was lost in the heat of the flames and the choking smoke. A quarter of an hour—loud cries of fear could be heard for the brave man—and then he sprang from the fire, blackened by smoke but unscathed except for singed eyebrows. Joyously the crowd surrounded him, congratulating the savior of the sick. John's modesty, however, prevented him from accepting praise and honors.

March 9

ST. FRANCES OF ROME, Widow

Honor your guardian angel

St. Frances. *Day of death*: March 9, 1440. *Grave*: in the church of Santa Maria Nuova in the Roman forum. *Life*. St. Frances of Rome founded the institute known as the "Oblati di Tor de Specchi" in the Holy City. She was a wealthy patrician and after her husband died, she gave up all her wealth to live a life of abject poverty. Her special privilege from heaven was familiar intercourse with her guardian angel. Reading the life of St. Frances, one gains the impression that she moved and lived in the spirit world more than on earth; in fact, that which gives her life its unique character is her intimate relationship with the blessed world of holy spirits.

During the three periods of her life, three angels of different rank accompanied her, ready to protect her soul against any onslaught of hell and to lead her step by step to spiritual perfection. Day and night the saint saw her angel busy at a mysterious task. With three little golden spindles he unceasingly spun golden threads, strung them around his neck, and diligently wound them into balls. A half year before her death he changed his work. Instead of spinning more golden thread, he began to weave three carpets of varying size with the golden thread he had spun. These carpets symbolized her lifework as virgin, mother, and religious.

Shortly before her death, she noticed how the angel was hurrying his work, and his face was unusually fresh and hap-

py. At the very moment when the last carpet had reached its required length, her soul departed into eternal bliss. *Application.* My guardian angel, too, is working on a garment, my garment of grace and glory. Am I in any way hindering his efforts?

March 10

THE FORTY HOLY MARTYRS

Perseverance to the very end

The Saints. Since ancient times these forty martyrs have been highly honored in the Orient (died c. 320). The touching story of their passion rests on an old Syrian account. Under Emperor Lycinius forty soldiers in Sebaste, a city in Armenia, made themselves illustrious for steadfastness in undergoing martyrdom. Thrown into horrible dungeons, chained, their mouths beaten with stones, they were finally driven out on a frozen lake one cold winter night and left there nude, to freeze to death.

But they beseeched heaven in the following prayer. "Lord, forty of us have begun to run the race. Grant that all forty may receive the crown; do not let anyone be missing at the end. Behold, is not forty an honorable number in Your sight? Did You not bless the fast of forty days, and at the end promulgate Your divine Law on earth? And when Elias sought You, O God, did You not reveal Yourself to him after he had fasted forty days?"

This their petition. When all the guards had left, the watchman, who alone was on duty, heard the martyrs praying and saw a light shining round about them; angels were descending from heaven, messengers from the King, bearing thirty-nine crowns which they distributed to them. Then he said to himself, "Are not forty there? Where is the crown of the fortieth?" And, lo, as he looked, he saw one of them who could not bear the cold come and leap into the warm bath that stood prepared; and the other holy fighters were grievously afflicted.

But God did not permit that their prayer should go unanswered; for the watchman, deeply moved, awakened the

other guards, stripped himself of his clothes, and after loudly proclaiming himself a Christian, joined the thirty-nine. When the servants of the prefect were informed, they used their lictor staves to break the legs of all these saints. Under this new torment all died except Melithon, the youngest. His mother was close by, and seeing that his bones were broken but that he was still alive, she consoled him with the words: "My son, have patience a little longer. Christ is standing at the door. He will assist you in the struggle."

When she saw that the bodies of all the others were put on carts to be taken away and burned, and that her son alone was left behind because the godless crowd hoped he might yet be induced to commit idolatry since he was but a boy, the holy woman put him on her shoulders and bravely followed the corpse-laden wagons. While in her arms, Melithon returned his soul to God; and his mother, who loved him so nobly, with her own hands laid his body upon the pile with his companions—for as they had been one in faith and fortitude, they should not be divided by death, but should enter heaven together.

What remained after the burning was thrown into a running stream; the ashes, however, were washed together into one place. Christians secretly gathered the sacred relics and placed the precious treasure in an honorable grave.

March 12

ST. GREGORY I, Pope and Doctor

For my part, I regard the virtue of patience greater than signs and wonders (one of the saint's maxims)

St. Gregory I. *Day of death*: March 12, 604. *Grave*: St. Peter's, Rome. *Life*: the greatest "liturgical Pope"; born around 540; imperial prefect of the city, 572; Papal Nuncio to the emperor in Constantinople, 579; unanimously elected to the see of Peter by the faithful and clergy, 590; died 604.

In her official book of heroes the Church ordinarily is very stinting with her praise, but of today's saint she says: "At

Rome, the holy pope, Gregory I, an eminent doctor of the Church. On account of his illustrious deeds, and his efforts to bring the English to believe in Christ, he is surnamed the Great and called the apostle of England."

At least in the field of liturgy Gregory ranks as the greatest of all the Popes. "The powerful yet restrained, the holy and hallowing melodies of the Church's official chant even to this day bear his name and will do so for all time. Gregory also strongly influenced the adoption of Latin as the Church's official language through his natural, easy, and lively style. A goodly number of his forty sermons on Gospel pericopes are read as lessons in the Breviary. No priest can say Mass without complying with some of Gregory's reforms. Into the second prayer preceding the consecration (Hanc igitur), he inserted the triple petition: 'order our days in Your peace; grant that we may be rescued from eternal damnation and counted within the fold of Your elect.' Practically speaking, his missal became the missal of the entire western Church and has retained its position to the present day. Gregory was indeed great from the viewpoint of liturgical worship" (Bihlmeyer).

Among the more important of his many writings are: forty homilies on the Gospels; the *Regula Pastoralis*, a treatise on pastoral duties that was widely used during the Middle Ages; *Moralia*, a textbook on moral theology arising from reflections on the Book of Job; the *Dialogues*, or several books on the lives of the saints.

March 15

ST. CLEMENT MARY HOFBAUER, Confessor

Strong in faith and ardent in love

This feast is observed in almost all countries where the German language is spoken.

1. St. Clement. *Day of death*: March 15, 1820. *Grave*: in the church of Our Lady by the Riverside, Vienna. *Life*. St. Clement Mary Hofbauer was born December 26, 1751, the ninth of twelve children. His boyhood's fondest desire—to be a priest—was finally realized after many years when he had

surmounted numerous difficulties. In Rome he joined the Redemptorist Fathers and in the course of time was given the providential mission of introducing his community into German-speaking countries. It was not an easy task. His work brought him to Vienna, where he proved himself a true apostle. The great cross of his life, but also the crown of his sanctity, was to see all his undertakings fail. He bore this trial in holy submission to the will of God, and died at the age of 70, in 1820.

Application. To be "strong in faith and ardent in love" is our prayerful resolution today in union with St. Clement. He was one of the first to rouse the German people out of their anti-religious, liberalistic spirit, the product of the age of enlightenment. His approach was that of simplicity and unaffected directness.

2. From His Life. Only a very great soul, one that trusts entirely in God, could write to Kuestrin from the confinement of a fortress as Father Hofbauer did when all his life's plans and hopes were shattered: "It is sweet to suffer when there is nothing for which conscience can reproach one . . . in all things I recognize the will of God. At all times may He be praised! God has permitted this because we were not as we should have been."*

Calumniated and vilified from the very first day, he never knew at what moment he would be banished. A policeman met him upon entering Vienna, and he continued to be annoyed by the authorities until death. At one time, he wrote: "How often I wished I were in a desert, for with sorrow in my heart I see what work could be done but cannot do it."

Nevertheless, with joyful surprise, he noted that well-disposed persons in the world about him were slowly being converted. It must be regarded as "a veritable miracle that so simple a man could effect countless conversions. There was nothing about him that attracted worldlings. His power to draw others came from within, and had its source in his soul's vitality and grace. His clothing was simple and worn, his shoes were

* Bihlmeyer, *op. cit.*

big, with thick soles, his back bent. But his face was always cheerful, kind, and inspiring; his voice was soft and sweet; nothing authoritarian in his manner, a truly humble person. Nevertheless, this venerable man, in spite of his apparent simplicity, plainness, and soft, sweet voice, possessed a most remarkable dignity."

March 17

ST. PATRICK, Bishop and Confessor

St. Patrick, free the island of our soul from all poisonous serpents and make it an island of holiness

St. Patrick. *Day of death*: March 17, 461. *Grave*: Down patrick, Ireland (in the cathedral). *Picture*: dressed as a bishop, with snakes at his feet and a three-leafed shamrock in his hand. *Life*. Patrick (as a Briton he was called Sucat) is Ireland's great apostle. "The life of this great man, in whom deep faith and Celtic tenacity are united, is rich in marvelous achievements the historical character of which cannot be denied. Even more marvelous are the innumerable legends that gratitude later entwined about him. It is said, for instance, that he drove all snakes and harmful creatures from Ireland into the sea. Whatever may be the truth of the story, to this day there is neither snake nor mole nor field mouse on the island; but that legend probably only expresses the fact that Patrick, by introducing Christianity, changed the religion and culture of the entire country" (Kaulen).

The saint christianized the age-old heathen practice of holding a "fire service" at the first full moon of spring. Brought to Rome by Irish monks the custom of blessing fire on Holy Saturday then spread throughout the entire western Church. *Application*. Our saint changed a pagan island into an island of saints; may his transforming power touch our hearts.

March 18

ST. CYRIL, Bishop of Jerusalem, Doctor of the Church

Know the one true God and Jesus Christ

1. St. Cyril. *Day of death*: March 18, 386. *Grave*: unknown. *Life*. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, was banished from his see on three occasions. With St. Athanasius and others, he belongs to the great champions of faith in the fight against Arianism. Famous as a teacher and preacher, he has left a series of catechetical instructions that constitute a priceless heirloom from Christian antiquity. Of the twenty-four extant discourses, nineteen were directed to catechumens during Lent as a preparation for baptism, while five so-called mystagogical instructions were given during Easter time to make the mysteries of Christianity better known to those already baptized.

Application. Our day needs good teachers for introducing and promoting the liturgy. Here it is not a matter of plain ordinary teaching for the purpose of imparting knowledge, but the formation of a Christian way of life along sacramental lines. In this, St. Cyril is an excellent model. He was a master in the art of instructing catechumens, especially on the Eucharist. May he direct us in promoting the liturgy; under him as a guide we will surely follow the direct road "to the Holy Trinity through Christ."— Our choice today will be the Lenten Mass with a commemoration of St. Cyril.

2. From St. Cyril's Catecheses. "When you approach (to receive holy Communion) do not do so with both hands outstretched and flat, or with fingers spread apart; but make your left hand a canopy for the right after the pattern of thrones used by kings. Then with your flat hand forming a hollow, receive the Body of Christ, and say 'Amen.'

After you have reverently sanctified your eyes by gazing upon the sacred Body, receive It; but be careful lest any particle be lost. For if you lose a portion, it will be as if you lost a part of yourself; for, tell me, if some one gave you grains of gold, would you not save them with the greatest care and watch so that none would be lost and you suffer damage?

Should you not, therefore, be far more careful that not even a crumb go lost of that which is more valuable than gold or precious gems?

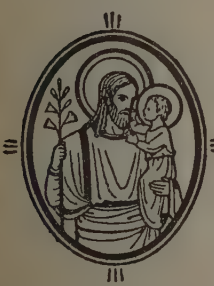
Then after eating the Body of Christ prepare to receive the chalice of His Blood; not with your hands stretched out toward it, but with bowed head, saying 'Amen' in adoration and reverence. Sanctify yourself, when you are about to receive the Blood of Christ; and while your lips are still moist, touch them with your hands and bless your eyes, your forehead, and your other senses. Then wait for the Oration and thank God who has made you worthy of so great a mystery.

Remember these various points. Keep yourselves blameless. Do not stay away from holy Communion; do not by defilement with sin rob yourselves of this sacred and sanctifying mystery. 'And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely—your spirit and soul and body' " (I Thess. 5:23).

March 19

ST. JOSEPH, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Go to Joseph



We interrupt the austerities of Lent to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph. Although the Lenten ferial Mass is not permitted today, we will not omit to familiarize ourselves with the message that it contains.

1. **St. Joseph.** Joseph was an ordinary manual laborer although descended from the royal house of David. In the designs of Providence he was destined to become the spouse of the Mother of God. His high privilege is expressed in a single phrase, "Foster-father of Jesus." About him Sacred Scripture has little more to say than that he was a just man—an expression which indicates how faithfully he fulfilled his high trust of protecting and guarding God's greatest treasures upon earth, Jesus and Mary.

The darkest hours of his life may well have been those when he first learned of Mary's pregnancy; but precisely in this time of trial Joseph showed himself great. His suffering, which likewise formed a part of the work of the redemption, was not without great providential import: Joseph was to be, for all times, the trustworthy witness of the Messiah's virgin birth. After this, he modestly retires into the background of holy Scripture.

Of St. Joseph's death the Bible tells us nothing. There are indications, however, that he died before the beginning of Christ's public life. His was the most beautiful death that one could have, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Humbly and unknown, he passed his years at Nazareth, silent and almost forgotten he remained in the background through centuries of Church history. Only in more recent times has he been accorded greater honor. Liturgical veneration of St. Joseph began in the fifteenth century, fostered by Sts. Brigid of Sweden and Bernadine of Siena. St. Teresa, too, did much to further his cult.

At present there are two major feasts in his honor. On March 19 our veneration is directed to him personally and to his part in the work of redemption, while on May 1 we honor him as the patron of workmen throughout the world and as our guide in the difficult matter of establishing equitable norms regarding obligations and rights in the social order. St. Joseph is also the patron of a holy death.

Today's Mass and Office are of recent origin. They were composed by Pope Clement XI, who made them obligatory in 1714. The systematic arrangement of texts and the parallel between Jacob's son and Mary's spouse is typical of formularies from that period. In the antiphons of Vespers and Matins all the Biblical passages about Joseph are found, set in chronological order. The lessons of the first nocturn and the responses after the lessons tell us about Joseph, Israel's youngest son.

The lessons of the second nocturn are from the mellifluous doctor of the Church, St. Bernard; in them he draws a parallel between the two Josephs. "That Joseph who was sold by his brothers through envy and who was taken down to Egypt

prefigured Christ who was sold by a disciple, and delivered to the Gentiles; but our Joseph fled from the envy of Herod and carried Christ to Egypt. The first Joseph remained loyal to his master and refused to have intercourse with his master's wife; the second Joseph honored his spouse as the Mother of God, recognized her as a virgin, and himself a virgin, became her protector. To that first Joseph it was given to know hidden things when interpreting dreams; while sleeping the second Joseph was privileged to learn the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The first Joseph stored up bread not for himself but for all the people; the second Joseph received into his keeping that living Bread which came down from heaven for himself as well as for the whole world."

The Gospel of the Mass is the same as that on the vigil of Christmas; it reports the severest trial in Joseph's life, a trial that was most intimately related to the greatest of the privileges for which we honor him.

March 21

ST. BENEDICT, Abbot

Prefer nothing to the work of God

1. St. Benedict. *Day of death*: March 21, c. 542. *Grave*: Monte Cassino. According to some his bones were transferred to Fleury sur Loire; Benedictines commemorate this transfer with a feast on July 11. *Picture*: an abbot with staff, rule book, and a raven at his side. *Life*. Benedict, the patriarch of western monasticism and founder of the Benedictine Order, was one of the greatest saints during the early Middle Ages. "Blessed Benedict was his name, and he was blessed also with God's grace. During his boyhood he showed mature understanding, and a strength of character far beyond his years kept his heart detached from every pleasure. Even while still living in the world, free to enjoy all it had to offer, he saw how empty it was and turned from it without regret" (Gregory the Great).

"Immeasurable are the fruits of Benedict's work. Particularly remarkable, however, is how oblivious he was of the social and cultural contributions for which he was responsible.

It is characteristic of true greatness to do great things silently, spurred on only by humble and pure ideals, leaving the increase to God who blesses a hundredfold" (Montalembert). St. Benedict's "Rule for Monks" was epoch making—it remains a sure guide to sanctity in any age. To him also, we owe the Church's night prayer, Compline. No man in history has been responsible for the existence of as many and as important liturgical centers as he.

Benedict was born of a noble Nursian family. First he studied in Rome, but dissatisfied with the worldly spirit about him, he fled to Subiaco and devoted his time to prayer and meditation, living as a hermit. Elected abbot by the monks of Vicovaro, he soon returned to solitude, for the monks tried to poison him because of his reforms. Beginning in 520, he founded twelve monasteries in the neighborhood of Subiaco; the foundation at Monte Cassino (529) became the cradle of his Order. Pope St. Gregory the Great was his first biographer.

2. The Orders and the Liturgy. St. Benedict founded an Order noted for its devotion to the liturgy. A key sentence in his program reads, "Prefer nothing to the work of God (Opus Dei)." The liturgy constituted the warp and woof of his life. This should be the ideal for all religious.

The laity can participate in the liturgical order of the day and year only in part because of duties toward their families, but members of religious communities have the opportunity of devoting themselves entirely to the Church's worship of God. They are in a position to make holy Mass the point of reference for the entire day, with the Hours of Divine Office circling like planets around the sun of the morning Sacrifice. They can change the daily midday meal into a "love feast" continuing the sacrificial banquet. They can celebrate the feasts and sanctify the seasons with full devotion. Religious houses, therefore, should be model liturgical communities; and the laity who are edified by their ideals should receive instruction and aid.

Religious communities now have a new duty, consonant with our times, to direct and inspire liturgically-minded lay people. Many monasteries have recognized this obligation and provide liturgical days or special services for them. For many, such

days or exercises are a unique religious experience from which they derive immense benefit, and which provide excellent norms for fashioning a liturgical way of life. May many more monasteries further this new type of pastoral work. There is no better way to lead souls to God than by initiating them into the liturgy.

March 24

ST. GABRIEL, Archangel

The Angel of the Incarnation

1. The Archangels. Holy Scripture gives us the names of three archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael. Present day liturgy has a feast in honor of each. Gabriel (etym., man of God) appears in the Old and New Testaments as the messenger of good tidings, especially of revelations concerning redemption. He pointed out to Daniel the meaning of the vision of the ram and the he-goat (Dan. 8:15f) and gave him the important prophecy on the seventy week-years till the Messiah's advent (Dan. 9:20f). In the temple he announced to Zacharias the birth of Christ's precursor (Luke 1:15-23).

But Gabriel's highest privilege was to herald to the holy Virgin of Nazareth God's choice of her as the Savior's mother (Luke 1:26-38). That is why he is called the "Angel of the Incarnation."

In the Old Testament Gabriel was honored as the protector and guardian of the Chosen People. No special feast or official honor was accorded our archangel during the first thousand years of the Christian era. His name begins to appear in the catalog of saints during the Middle Ages but only in connection with the feast of the annunciation. In 1921 Pope Benedict XV ordered that his feast be kept by the entire Church.

The prayer for the blessing of the incense at the Offertory of holy Mass originally began, "Through the intercession of blessed Gabriel the archangel who stands at the right of the altar of incense. . . ." Only later was Gabriel changed to Michael. (Choose the Mass of Lent with a commemoration of the holy archangel.)

March 25

THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

And the Word was made flesh

1. The Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Again Lent's austerity is interrupted as we solemnly keep a feast in honor of the annunciation. The annunciation is a mystery that belongs to the temporal rather than to the sanctoral cycle in the Church's calendar. For the feast commemorates the most sublime moment in the history of time, the moment when the second divine Person of the most Holy Trinity assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Thus it is a feast of our Lord, even as it is of Mary, although the liturgy centers wholly around the Mother of God (cf. the very opposite on Feb. 2).

We have, then, an opportunity to meditate upon the role that Mary played in the incarnation of the Son of God, and thereby in the work of our redemption. Today's feast is the first harbinger of the coming Advent and Christmas, the second will be the nativity of Christ's holy precursor (March 25—June 24—December 25). The liturgy wants to say: only nine more months and we again will stand before the newborn King of peace.

Actually we have already celebrated the mystery of the annunciation on the Ember Wednesday of Advent in the beautiful *Missa aurea* (a much older Mass than today's). On that day the remembrance of the annunciation served to prepare us for Christmas; but because the liturgy also tends to observe mysteries in conformity with time relationships, today's feast was added later. That on Ember Wednesday accents the incarnation while today's places Mary in the forefront. In the Middle Ages March 25 marked the beginning of the civil year.

2. **Holy Mass (Vultum tuum).** The ferial Lenten Mass may not be said today. In ancient times the annunciation liturgy began in the church of St. Hadrian and ended with Mass at St. Mary Major. It is easily seen why the Mass text should be very similar to the *Missa aurea.*

The two *Readings* complement each other—the *Epistle* gives prophecy, the *Gospel* fulfillment. Isaias foretold, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel." St. Luke records, "Hail . . .you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus. He shall be called great . . . the Son of the Most High." This beautiful Gospel must be numbered among the most sublime revelations man has ever received.

In the chants the "Church's Nuptial Hymn" occurs repeatedly (Ps. 44). In the truest sense Mary is the bride of Christ, a type of holy Church. During the Sacrifice of the Mass the mystery of the feast is realized mystically in our souls as we too "conceive the Lord." That is why the two Eucharistic processionals have such deep meaning for us: "Hail Mary . . . blessed is the fruit of your womb" (*Off.*) and "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive . . ." (*Comm.*).

Note how the *Postcommunion*, an ancient Collect, scans the whole life of Christ from the annunciation to the glory of His resurrection. In ancient times, the twenty-fifth of March was regarded as the day on which Christ died, hence the allusion to "the passion and Cross." Likewise according to our present calendar Holy Week and Easter frequently fall around March 25.

March 27

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, Confessor and Doctor of the Church

The veneration of images

1. St. John. *Day of death*: May 6, about 754. *Grave*: in the monastery of St. Sabba near Jerusalem. *Life*. St. John Damascene is the last doctor of the Eastern Church. He comes at the end of a long line of mighty apologists for the orthodox Catholic faith, at a time when throughout the East a tragic decline had already begun. Soon after his death followed the schism that tore the Greek Church away from the Rock of Peter.

St. John's great contribution consisted in synthesizing the Church's doctrine into one organic whole, thus paving the way and creating the main source for the scholastics of a later century.

In his battle against the iconoclasts he wrote a series of fiery apologies. His defense of the veneration of images made him a martyr. Through the instigation of Leo, the Isaurian emperor, he was falsely accused of treason before his sovereign, the caliph of Damascus. Even though John defended his honor under oath, the caliph believed the calumny and ordered John's right hand cut off. The hand is said to have been restored through a miracle. After this he distributed his goods to the poor and joined the Laura (monastery) of St. Sabba near Jerusalem where he wove baskets and performed the most menial tasks.

Application. The Oration of the day reminds us of the place images have in liturgical prayer life.

March 28

ST. JOHN CAPISTRAN, Confessor

We are soldiers of Christ

1. St. John. *Day of death*: October 23, 1456. *Grave*: at Ujlak on the Bosnian border in a monastery he founded; his re-

mains, however, were lost after being taken by the Turks. *Life.* John Capistran ranks among the most powerful preachers in Church history. "We have seen this man in Nurenberg. He was 65 years old, short, lean, his body only skin and bones; yet in his work he was cheerful and untiring, preaching daily the most profound and inspiring truths." Thus the humanist, Hartmann Schedel of Nurenberg, described our saint in his *Weltchronick*. The famous victory of the Christians over the Turks at Belgrade in 1456 is attributed to his bravery and zeal.

Application. Today's saint inspires us to be soldiers of Christ. With St. John Capistran as our leader, we resolve anew to subdue the enemies of God. At his time they were called Turks, today they have other names, but hell is always the ultimate driving force. Liturgy is a work of peace, but only inasmuch as it makes the church militant an army of God ready to do battle.—Our choice will be the Lenten Mass with a commemoration of St. John Capistran.

2. From His Life. To whatever city he came, he was always solemnly received by a procession of people and clergy.* The largest churches were not able to hold the audiences. Therefore he was obliged to preach out in the open from a scaffold or, as usually was the case, from the roof of a house. Great throngs streamed out to hear him, frequently twenty to thirty thousand at a time. On one occasion sixty thousand had assembled in Erfurt, and in Vienna a hundred thousand were present for the opening address.

The people listened with sighs and tears even though they did not understand his language. He preached in Latin; one of his companions then translated it into the vernacular. Although the Latin sermon might last two or three hours, the audience quietly remained two more hours in the open streets, disregarding cold and snow, to hear the translation. Just to have seen the "holy man" was a consolation for the simple, pious folk. Often so many eager listeners climbed the trees in the neighboring gardens that limbs would snap under the weight. Yet no one ever seems to have been injured by the unfortunate experience.

* Bihlmeyer, *op. cit.*

April 2

ST. FRANCIS OF PAULA, Confessor

Out of love

St. Francis. *Day of death*: April 2, 1507. *Grave*: his body, which once rested in the monastery church of Plessis-les-Tours, was burned by heretics. *Life*. Francis of Paula founded the Minim Order, a branch of the Franciscans (1454). These "Hermits of St. Francis of Assisi" dwelt in small houses, and as "least" brethren, endeavored to live a more austere and humble life than the "Fratres Minores."

The saint worked numerous miracles. He had a favorite ejaculation, one that welled up from the depths of his physical and spiritual being: "Out of love." This was an all-powerful ejaculation for him and for his companions. "Out of love" the heaviest stone was light; "Out of love" he admonished and punished; "Out of love" he once crossed the sea without a boat.

For on a certain occasion the saint wanted to go from the Italian mainland to Sicily. A boat was lying in the harbor. Francis asked the owner if he would take him and his companion along on the boat. "If you pay, monk," the sailor answered surlily, "I will take you along." "Out of love," the saint humbly pleaded; "for I have no money with me." "Then I have no ship for you," came the mocking reply. "Out of love," was Francis' answer, "forgive me if I go away." He walked about a stone's throw to the shore, knelt down, and blessed the sea. Then, to the sailor's great surprise, the saint suddenly stood up, stepped out on the tossing waves, and with firm foot trod over the surging sea.

St. Francis of Paula stood high in the esteem of the French king, Louis XI, whom he helped prepare for death.

April 4

ST. ISIDORE, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Be educated liturgically

St. Isidore. *Day of death*: April 4, 636. *Grave*: at first in the cathedral at Seville, but since 1063 in a church dedicated to his honor at Leon (Spain). *Life.* Isidore, archbishop of Seville and brother of the saintly Bishop Leander, ranks as the most outstanding person in the Church of Spain during the seventh century. Because of the singular holiness of his life, he was idolized by the people. Wherever he appeared, throngs gathered about him. "Some came to see the miracles that he performed in the name of the Lord. The sick came to be freed from their sufferings, for the power of God emanated from him and he would heal them all" (Bollandists: April 1, 340).

He is regarded as the great restorer of the Spanish Church after the Visigoths returned to the Catholic faith. He also contributed greatly to the development of Spain's liturgy. He presided over the fourth provincial council of Toledo (633), the most important in Spanish history. Rich in merit, he died in 636 after ruling his see 40 years. St. Gregory the Great was one of his personal friends.

Application. In the Oration we call St. Isidore the "teacher of life." He was, indeed, a distinguished exponent and teacher of the liturgy, a subject to which he was deeply attached. This is everywhere evident in his two books on liturgical worship.— The Mass, *In medio,* is from the Common of a Doctor.

April 5

ST. VINCENT FERRER, Confessor

Liturgy — the bridge between worship and work

St. Vincent. *Day of death*: April 5, 1419. *Grave*: in the cathedral of Vannes (Brittany). *Picture*: a Dominican having a sun with the letters I.H.S. in his hand. *Life.* The Dominican, St. Vincent Ferrer (born 1350), takes a place among the great-

est churchmen of the early 15th century. The magic power of his speech captivated all, both those who were eager to listen and those who were hesitant. In Spain alone, as a result of his words and his miracles, twenty-five thousand Jews and eight thousand Moors are said to have been converted. An exact record of the sermons he gave would have been impossible; one estimate mentions twenty thousand. Vincent took an active part in the affairs of the Church of his time; during the closing days of the papal schism, he labored to restore peace and unity in Christendom.

Application. Note the three points stressed in the Breviary: "Every morning Vincent sang a solemn Mass, and every day he preached in public. He observed a perpetual fast." Here we have the ideal—a liturgical life united with deep love of neighbor. St. Vincent was constantly working to aid his fellow men; in his life we may see how the liturgy, when properly applied, tends to unite harmoniously the worship of God, corporal works of mercy, and personal asceticism.—The Mass, *Os justi*, is from the Common of a Confessor; its theme is the vigilant servant.

April 11

ST. LEO I, Pope and Doctor of the Church

Upon this rock . . . .

St. Leo. *Day of death*: November 10, 461. (On April 11 his remains were transferred to the basilica of St. Peter.) *Grave*: in St. Peter's, Rome. *Life.* Leo I, Pope and Doctor of the Church, ruled from 440 to 461. He is surnamed "the Great" and ranks among the most illustrious sovereigns that ever sat on the throne of St. Peter. Of his life, we know little; with him the man seems to disappear before the Pope. He saw most clearly that one of his greatest tasks was to vindicate the primacy of the Roman bishop, St. Peter's successor, and to raise the prestige of the Holy See before the entire world. Hardly any Pope in history has occupied a like position in the ecclesiastical and political world.

As a writer, too, his name is famous. His sermons, which occur frequently in the Divine Office, belong to the finest and most profound in patristic literature. The Council of Chalcedon was held under his direction (451). The Breviary tells us: Leo I, an Etruscan, ruled the Church at the time when Attila, King of the Huns, who was called the Scourge of God, invaded Italy. After a siege of three years, he took, sacked and burned Aquileia, and then hurried on toward Rome. Inflamed with anger, his troops were already preparing to cross the Po, at the point where it is joined by the Mincio.

Here Attila was stopped by Leo (452). With God-given eloquence, the Pope persuaded him to turn back, and when the Hun was asked by his servants why, contrary to custom, he had so meekly yielded to the entreaties of a Roman bishop, he answered that he had been alarmed by a figure dressed like a priest that stood at Leo's side; this individual was holding a drawn sword and acted as if he would kill him if he advanced farther. As a result Attila retreated to Pannonia.

Meanwhile, Leo returned to Rome, and was received with universal rejoicing. Some time later, the Vandal Genseric entered the city, and again Leo, by the power of his eloquence and the authority of his holy life, persuaded him to desist from atrocity and slaughter (455). Leo was also active in matters liturgical. The so-called Leonine sacramentary, a compendium of Missal prayers, contains many of his compositions; some liturgists give him credit for the beautiful offices of Advent.

April 13

ST. HERMENEGILD, Martyr

One died that a nation might live

1. **St. Hermenegild.** *Day of death*: April 13, 585. *Grave*: in Seville; his head in Saragossa. *Picture*: with a royal crown and ax (the instrument of his martyrdom). *Life.* Through a bloody death, the royal heir, Hermenegild, became "the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died." It did not, however, re-

main alone—it brought forth "much fruit," the conversion of an entire nation. "In the kingdom of the Visigoths one died that many might live; and after one good kernel fell, a rich harvest of souls arose to everlasting life" (Gregory I).

In the Breviary, St. Gregory the Great gives a masterly description of the saint's life. "Hermenegild, the son of Leovigild, king of the Visigoths, rejected the Arian heresy and embraced the Catholic faith through the preaching of that most venerable man, Leander, bishop of Seville (Feb. 27, in the Roman Martyrology). This same bishop, I may add, was for a long time a very dear friend of mine.

Now Hermenegild's father, who was still an Arian, strove to make his son apostatize. First, he offered him gifts, then he sought to move him by threats. But when the young prince always answered that once having had the knowledge of the true faith, he could never forsake it, his father became enraged and confiscated all his goods. Nor could this shake his constancy. Then Leovigild cast his son into a prison, with neck and hands in iron fetters. Now the heir to a royal throne began to despise his earthly kingdom, and longed vehemently for a heavenly one. In bonds and sackcloth he implored Almighty God to give him strength. He had indeed suffered the loss of all material things, but his suffering made him regard as worthless the glory of this world which passes away so easily.

On Easter Eve, in the dead of night, his cruel and unbelieving father sent the Arian bishop to bring him Eucharistic bread that had been sacrilegiously consecrated. Reception would mean reinstatement in the king's favor. But when the Arian bishop entered the prison, God's holy servant rebuked the unbeliever as he deserved, and drove him from his presence with just reproaches. For though he was weak and bound with regard to the outer body, yet with a free spirit he was standing on the high and holy mountains of faith.

Informed by the bishop of what had happened, the king's rage knew no bounds. Immediately he ordered his executioners to kill Hermenegild. The deed was soon accomplished.

With an ax they clove his head. Nevertheless, they only put to death that which the murdered man had long despised.

Immediately remarkable phenomena began to occur as proof of the martyr's sanctity. The result was that everyone regarded it as their holy duty to venerate the body as that of a true martyr. Thereupon the inhuman father, the murderer of his own child, was seized by remorse and regretted what he had done. Still his sorrow was not such as to bring salvation. For though he knew that the Catholic faith was true, he would not abandon his error through fear of his subjects.

But when he came to the point of death, he committed his son Recarred, who was still an Arian, to the care of Bishop Leander, the very person whom he once had grievously persecuted; it was the king's wish that Leander would instruct his son and by his exhortations effect the same change that he had produced in his martyred brother. Leovigild died soon after he had given these instructions.

Reccared did not follow the example of his irreligious father, but rather that of his martyred brother. He forsook the Arian heresy and effected the return of the whole nation of the Visigoths to the true faith. No man in his kingdom could become a soldier who through heresy dared to remain an enemy of God's kingdom. Thus Reccared became a herald of that same faith for which his brother had been a martyr.

There is no doubt that the main credit for these many conversions to the bosom of Almighty God must be given to St. Hermenegild."

Gregory the Great learned the circumstances of the martyrdom from St. Leander and recorded them in 594, only a few years after the event itself. The feast has been celebrated in the Church since the time of Pope Urban VIII.

2. Holy Mass (Protexisti). In paschal time one class of saints, the martyrs, receives special honor; for they resemble most closely the King of martyrs, Christ Jesus, who through His death sanctified every martyrdom. In a most unique way those who have died for the faith are privileged to share in the triumph and resurrection of their King. For these reasons a

special "Common during Eastertide" has been created for them.

The texts of this Common have a catacomb atmosphere. In the *Introit*, the martyr sings a thanksgiving hymn, fully aware that persecution has only enhanced his triumph. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday we applied Psalm 63 to the sufferings of Christ, now we apply it to the martyrs. The *Epistle* is equally dramatic; we look into the great beyond and see the persecutors standing in the presence of their victims; how frightened they are as they say, "These are they whom we once derided . . . we fools esteemed their life madness . . . behold, how they are numbered among the children of God."

The *Gospel* is proper, chosen with particular reference to the spirit of renunciation shown by today's saint: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother . . . and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). Hermenegild actually did despise all things earthly, father, kingdom, life itself, for the sake of Christ. The various chants are exceptionally appropriate, especially the *Alleluia* and *Offertory* verse, "The heavens proclaim Your wonders, Lord" (do not miss the subtle association of ideas).

April 14

ST. JUSTIN, Martyr

ST. TIBURTIUS AND COMPANIONS

The Cross is the power of God

1. **St. Justin,** surnamed "Martyr," was born in Palestine of Greek parents. A philosopher, he embraced Christianity in the prime of life (c. 130). He became one of the Church's most illustrious apologists, bravely defending the Christian faith against the calumnies of pagans. His first apology is of particular importance because it affords an insight into the moral life and the religious services of the early Church.

Justin died a martyr's death, beheaded by order of the prefect Rusticus between 163 and 167. We possess authentic "Acts of Martyrs" describing his passion. The cynic Crescens, whose

immorality he exposed, brought an accusation against him through a desire for vengeance. Thus as a reward for loyally and faithfully defending the faith, Justin received the martyr's crown.

2. Holy Mass (Narraverunt). The Mass formulary has several texts that are proper and apply directly to our saint, and in this it differs from the usual Common of a Martyr during Paschaltide. In the *Introit* we hear the apologist refuting the "fables" of the heathens "before kings." His manner of life is "undefiled," he walks "in the law of the Lord." Justin forsook the philosophy of the world and accepted the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (*Coll.*). May our day that relies so much on the superficial and false wisdom of the world, find this true knowledge, this firm faith!

How fitting, too, is that well-known passage from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians on the "foolishness of the Cross" that is the "power of God" for Christians. "For the Jews require signs and the Greeks seek after 'wisdom'; but we, for our part, preach a crucified Christ—to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block and to the Gentiles foolishness; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God" (*Epist.*). The *Gradual*, an echo of the Epistle, repeats several of its verses meditatively.

The *Gospel* occurs in various Masses for martyrs; Christ is telling them to preach openly whatever God has put into their hearts, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do . . . everyone who acknowledges Me before men, him will the Son of Man also acknowledge before the angels of God." Our saint translated these words into action. In the sacrifice banquet we see St. Justin receiving "the crown of justice"; of this crown the holy Eucharist is a sure pledge (*Comm.*). May we "ever be thankful for the gifts that we have received" (*Postc.*).

3. What does St. Justin tell us about the ancient Christian Mass? "On the day called Sunday all the baptized, whether they live in cities or on the land, assemble in one place where during the prescribed time they read the commentaries of the

apostles (i.e., the Gospels) or the works of the prophets. When the reader has finished, the president (bishop) exhorts them to practice these noble ideals. After this we all rise and pray for one another and for the whole world, so that in action too we might be found worthy members of the congregation and thus attain eternal salvation.

After we have finished the prayers, we greet one another with the kiss of peace. The bread and a cup with wine and water is presented to him who presides over the brethren. He accepts the oblation, gives praise and glory to the Father through the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost, and with strong emotion utters a long thanksgiving (Eucharist) prayer for these gifts. When the prayers and thanksgivings are over, the people voice their approval with the exclamation: Amen. After this, those whom we call deacons distribute to everyone present the Eucharistic bread and the wine with water, and likewise take portions to the absent.

We call this food the Eucharist. Of it no one may eat who does not believe that our doctrines are true, or who has not been cleansed by the bath for the remission of sins and spiritual re-birth, or whose life does not conform to the precepts of Christ. For we do not consume these things as ordinary food and drink; rather we have been instructed that the bread and wine consecrated by the prayer of thanksgiving become the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate. . . ."

This passage from St. Justin's first *Apology* (ch. 65-67) is the oldest extant description of a Roman Mass.

4. **St. Tiburtius** and his two companions in martyrdom, Valerian and Maximus, became saints through the prayers and efforts of St. Cecilia, the illustrious virgin-martyr of the ancient Roman Church (c. 230). Valerian was Cecilia's noble and chaste fiancé; Tiburtius was his brother. When Maximus, the executioner, saw them going to the place of execution as joyously as if they were going to a wedding, he followed their example. The sacred remains of these martyrs are now honored in the church of St. Cecilia.